

Aruba TODAY

On Top Of The News

Email: news@arubatoday.comWebsite: www.arubatoday.com

Thursday, December 3, 2009



Price of a barrel
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INSIDE TODAY

U.S. NEWS

GOING ROUGE



Copies of Sarah Palin's new book "Going Rogue" are ready for a book signing at the Costco Tuesday, Dec. 1, 2009, in Tempe, Ariz. Hundreds of Palin supporters showed up to buy her book and meet the former Alaska governor and 2008 Republican vice presidential candidate.

Read more on Page B2

SPORTS NEWS

PHILLY'S ANSWER



In this Nov. 6, 2009, file photo, Memphis Grizzlies' Allen Iverson brings the ball upcourt against the Los Angeles Lakers during an NBA basketball game in Los Angeles.

Read more on Page B11

Aruba Foundation E FARO together with Hairdressers

The world commemorates World Aids Day



ORANJESTAD – "E Faro" is a support group for people living with HIV and AIDS and together with Hairdressers on Aruba they commemorated World Aids

Day on Tuesday. They invited everyone on the island to enjoy a free haircut. Several different locations participating were: Cache Boutique - Ponton, Knipoo



- Zuidstraat and Hairfashion Boutique - Wilhelminastr. About 70 to 80 people got a haircut and gave their support the cause. *Continued on Pages 8 & 9*

Building a terrific site

Beach Volleyball ready to rumble on Aruba!



DIVI - Beach Volleyball is coming to Aruba in a big way: the Dutch professional beach volley elite will spend a two-week training camp here, playing a televised tournament in the process. These guys and gals are not just anyone: they belong to the absolute world top. As the international competition is more than a little fierce, Aruba's lovely beaches and perfect weather provides the ultimate opportunity for outdoor training and conditioning.

For the players, a medal at the Olympic Games in London in 2012 is their ultimate goal, but for now the upcoming tournament needs priority attention-wise. They love the Aruban climate, especially now that the weather in Holland is abominable.

Organized by FreeTime Promotion, with the support of the

Aruba Tourism Authority ATA, Divi Resorts and Martinair, a terrific site has been put up, complete with VIP tent, inflatable boarding, shade and stands. Local Beach Tennis organizers Jochem Ros and Sjoerd de Vries have been instrumental in getting the five-court site in place. The location: Tamarijn Beach Resort at the Divi Winds side.

The tournament starts on Saturday, December 5 and continues until Sunday afternoon of December 6. The top Dutch players will stay on the island until December 15.

Photo shows Jochem (on the phone), Jonathan, Guillette and Rein on Wednesday morning, as the site is in its early building stage. □



Early Birds catch the Fresh Catch at Fishes & More

Ask about the Early Bird Menu from 4 PM to 6:30 PM



Fishes & More specialize in fresh fish and seafood, and at the same time please the non-fish lovers as well. All the dishes are prepared a la minute by an internationally experienced kitchen team, which gives the twist to our dishes. Influences from all over the world are found back

on the menu and they are already well known for our daily changing specials. If you have a large party, or if there is anything you feel like in particular, Fishes & More can always arrange to have your dinner cooked just for you, as they work only with fresh and honest

products!

Ideally located in front of the Occidental Resort (Former Allegro), they are visited both by individuals and families alike, as we have a kids playground and a kids menu to entertain them, so they can enjoy their

dinner as much as you will yours!

We have entertainment every night at 8PM, and even after dinner the perfect night out continues, as you

can shop till you drop since the shops on our friendly square are open until eleven.

See what its like to experience real fresh dining joy with a twist!

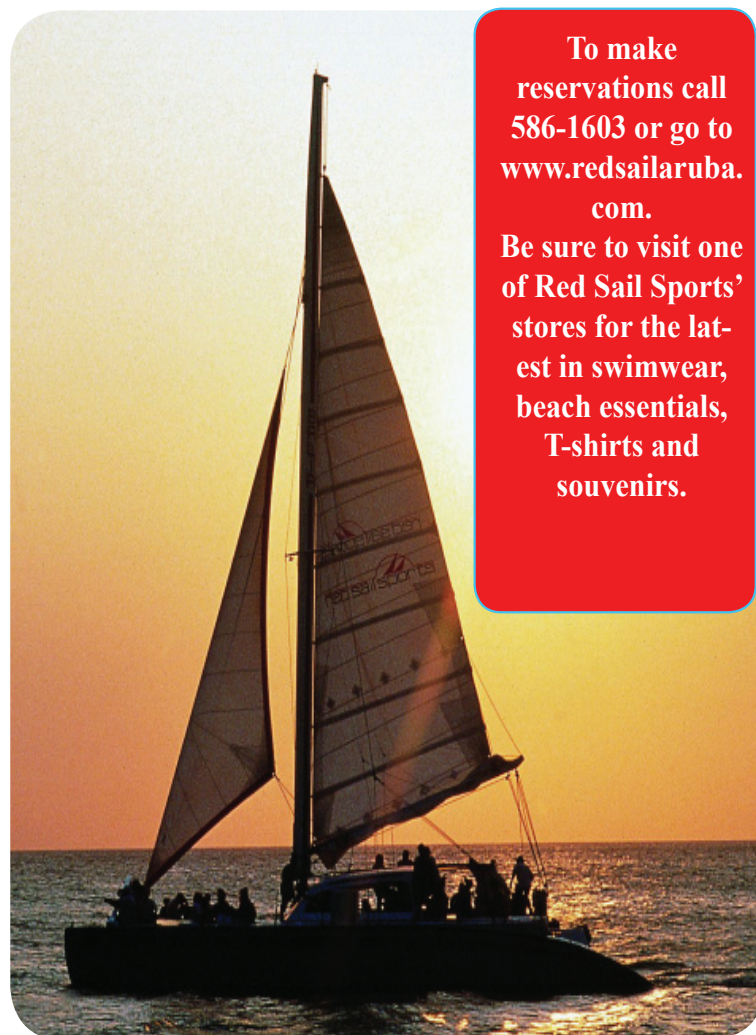
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To make reservations call 586-1603 or go to www.redsailaruba.com.

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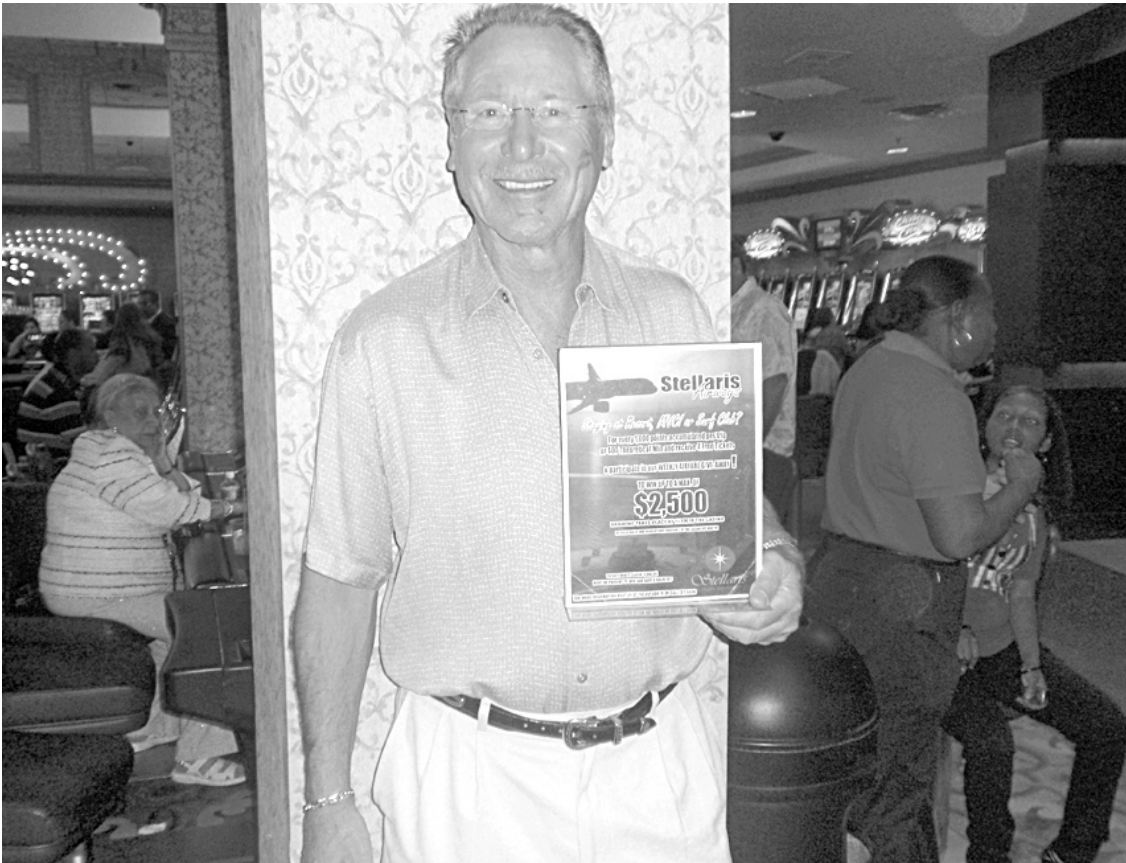
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Winner Airways Promotion Receives Airfare To Aruba In Cash

Stellaris Casino Raffles One Winner Every Thursday



Manfred Mack is pictured receiving his airfare to Aruba in cash at Stellaris Casino, November 26.

PALM BEACH – On Thursday November 26th the Stellaris Casino announced another lucky winner for the Airways promotion. By means of this promotion Marriott guest Manfred Mack won the entire airfare for the trip to Aruba in cash. Entering for the promotion is only possible for Marriott's hotel guests and timeshare owners who earned at least 1,000 points on the slotmachines in one week.

"This airways promotion started as an incentive for our loyal Marriott guests and owners and has proven to be very successful" says Casino General Manager Peter Keijzer. "Guest who earn 1,000 points on our slotmachines or 400 accumulated win points at the table games in one week, will receive 4 tickets to enter for the promotion. A raffle takes place every Thursday night in the casino and the winner receives the costs for their airfare to Aruba in cash, up to a maximum of \$2,500."

Every week guests have a renewed chance to win by accumulation points on their Preferred

Players Card from Friday to Thursday. The raffle can only take place if a minimum of 15 loyal players entered their raffle tickets for the promotion. More information on Aruba's largest casino and the Airways promotion can be obtained at the Stellaris VIP Desk or online at www.stellariscasino.com.

Aruba Marriott Resort & Stellaris Casino boasts 411 fully renovated guestrooms – the most spacious on the island – each with large, private balconies overlooking the sparkling waters of the Caribbean Sea. On property, seven restaurants and cafes provide fare from light to elegant, while the largest casino in Aruba, a 6,500 square-foot spa, renewed free-form swimming pool with cascading waterfalls and high-energy health club offer entertaining diversions. To obtain more information call the Aruba Marriott Resort & Stellaris Casino at 888-PARADISE or visit www.arubamarriott.com. □

Please help out

Animal Rights Aruba needs dog-loving volunteers



ORANJESTAD - The Animal Rights Aruba (ARA) foundation urgently needs your help if you are a dog lover and want to spend just two hours of your time per week for a very good cause: taking care of abandoned, abused and unwanted dogs. Volunteers are needed to walk the dogs, clean their cages, feed the animals and give them their medication, should that be needed. And once in a while a volunteer will be asked to go to the vet with a sick animal.

Would you have some time to spare and do you wish to help where help is much needed, then please call 587-3938



between 6 and 8 pm.

Volunteers can choose to work the morning shift or the afternoon shift, each lasting about two hours.

The dogs will love you for it!



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Starbucks struts stuff for Aruban media



ORANJESTAD - The world's favorite coffee franchise, with 16,700 outlets in 50 countries, just made it 51 with the opening of the Starbucks Aruba in the Renaissance Marketplace on November 28, during the mega event in Oranjestad, the Renaissance "Island Extravaganza."

"OMG!" replied Starbucks Director of Business Development and Coffee Master Mike Schieffer, to queries regarding the reception of Starbucks by the

Aruban populace, "It was beyond anything we could have imagined." The final Saturday in November was a particularly busy day for island media, with a plethora of events taking place around Aruba, so Tuesday, December 1, hard-working local press members were treated to an informal coffee-klatch at the waterfront café to sample the diversity of offerings for which Starbucks is famous. "The menu is 90% Starbucks' standards," admitted Mr. Schieffer, who was on island for the opening, "but we also take into account cultural preferences, and there are often variations in our menu that will make it very appealing to local tastes." Tuesday's event featured some of the better known lattes, but a strong emphasis was placed on the many refreshing cold versions of their famous brews, which are so suited to Aruba's tropical climate. "This is my favorite afternoon "picker-upper" explained Mike to radio station owner Emil



Kelkboom, as he handed him a Caramel Brule Frappuccino, which Emil awarded a two-thumbs up. Shop manager Vivian Tromp provided a very pleasant afternoon delight for island press who sampled cool Strawberry Smoothies and refreshing Passion Tea Lemonade, delightful alternatives after a hot afternoon of shopping in Oranjestad. Super-rich brownies with a hint of mocha were the perfect partners to

the coffee samplers, and Mr. Schieffer revealed that "even though all the pastries and breads offered by Starbucks Aruba follow our recipes, they are baked fresh in the Renaissance kitchens daily." YUM! Starbucks Aruba opens at 10:00 AM seven days a week until well after the dinner hour to savor your favorite brew and the stunning vista of Oranjestad Harbor. Sounds like a plan. □

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AAA with some tips for travelling during the holidays

ORANJESTAD - This year again Aruba Airport Authority N.V. (AAA) foresees a busy holiday season where many passengers will be using the many facilities of the airport during the holiday season.

The following advices will contribute to making the departure process as efficient as possible, without forgetting any security aspects.

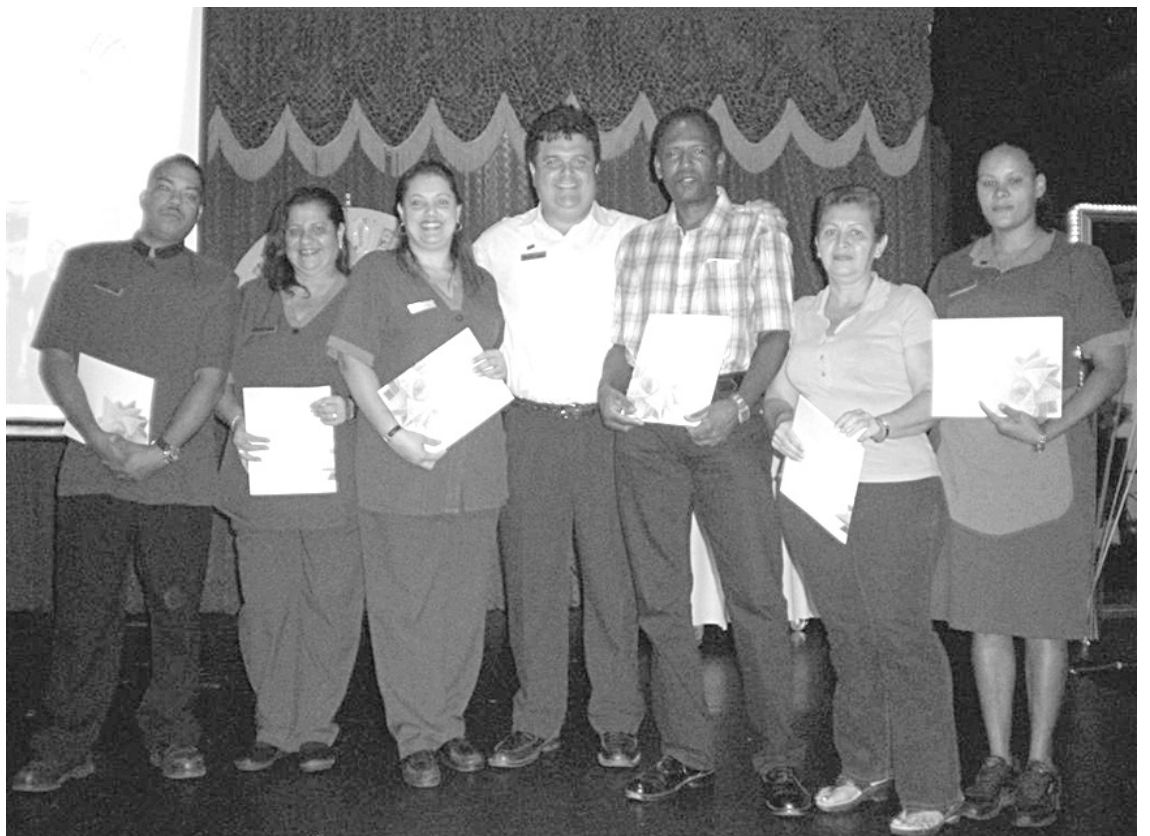
Tips for travelling during the holidays:

- When planning your trip
 - Check if your pasport and the passports of those who are travelling with you as well are valid
 - Persons with a stay-over permit have to check if their permit is valid
 - If you are travelling with minors, they will need their parents' permission to do so.
- Be at the airport on time
 - For sure during the busy holdiays, all passengers have to be 3 hours prior their flight at the airport to have sufficient time to go through the check-in process, access control, immigrations and screening. This is the only way to guarantee that you will reach your flight on the stipulated time.
- Prevent towing fees
 - Prevent having to pay high towing fees by parking in the parkinglot. All vehicles parked in front of the terminal of the airport will be towed for security reasons and all the costs involved will be at the owner's expense.
- Dress properly for travelling
 - Limit the use of jewelry and metal articles
 - Use shoes that are easy to take off and put on
- If you're travelling with your Laptop
 - Remember to take your laptop out of its case for it to be revised
- Don't forget about the liquids, gel and aerosole restrictions
 - Each passenger is allowed to travel with only one transparent bag containing bottles of maximum 3 ounces of liquid, gel and aerosole. The bag has to be 1/4 size.
 - These restrictions are only for handluggage. Liquids are allowed in carry-ons.

For more information on flights and the list of the current items permitted, please visit our website www.airportaruba.com ☐


At The Westin Resort, Aruba

Special recognition for members of Public Areas department




PALM BEACH - Recently, several members of the Westin's Public Areas department were acknowledged for superior efforts during one of the property's busiest weeks. The Westin Resort, Aruba is one of the top choices on the island for incentive and convention groups, and during the month of November, two very important conventions were hosted on the property. The SITE convention and the Symposius Medicus group both chose Westin to hold meetings and seminars, as well as various functions all around the resort. The demand on the team overseeing the maintenance and cleanliness of these

areas was high, and during this time, with the Director of Housekeeping Arturo Delgado presented the team with certificates of appreciation for their excellent performance with one of the cleanest resorts they have been involved with. ☐



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JetBlue set to boost trips from Logan to Caribbean



By Katie Johnston Chase
JetBlue plans to announce today that it will increase flights from Boston to the Caribbean by 25 percent. The news, which comes a month after the low-cost carrier revealed plans to increase its total number of flights out of Logan International Airport by 30 percent, positions it to become the biggest airline flying out of Boston. Starting May 3, JetBlue will

add weekly flights year-round to Aruba; Cancún, Mexico; San Juan, Puerto Rico; and Montego Bay, Jamaica, and continue its daily service to Bermuda and Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. Adding Caribbean destinations in May isn't ideal timing, said Daniel Kasper, head of the transportation practice at the Cambridge office of LECG, an economic and financial

consulting firm. But he said it shows that JetBlue plans to grab openings in the market quickly to try to keep low-cost competitors Southwest Airlines and AirTran Airways at bay. "I think what they're trying to do is really carve out some space for themselves in Boston," Kasper said.

Last month, the airline also added flights to destinations outside of the Caribbean, including Chicago, Denver, and San Francisco. With all the additions, JetBlue will operate an average of 70 flights a day to 33 destinations.

That makes JetBlue the airline with the most flights out of Logan and puts it in line to become the top carrier in terms of number of passengers out of Boston, said Edward Freni, director of aviation at the Massachusetts Port Authority, which runs Logan. JetBlue, which already has the most destinations flying from

Logan, currently is tied with American Airlines for the most passengers out of the airport, at about 3 million a year.

"This latest announcement is really gratifying for everybody here because they've basically backfilled destinations that other airlines have shed," Freni said.

Indeed, JetBlue's announcement comes after US Airways recently said that it would drop six of its eight Caribbean destinations next winter - including San Juan, Montego Bay, and Punta Cana, Dominican Republic - and shut down its 327-person Boston crew base on May 2.

JetBlue, which stepped in to fill the gap left by US Airways, will continue to grow, said Scott Laurence, the airline's vice president of route planning. "I think there's more to come," he said.

Ned Reynolds, a spokesman for American Airlines,

which has 18 destinations and an average of 64 daily flights out of Logan, said the carrier isn't concerned about JetBlue's growing niche. "What is important for American Airlines is the quality of service and having the best route system that meets the needs of our New England customers," he said. □

The organising committee also invited athletes

from Aruba

URUGUAY HOSTS FIRST SOUTH AMERICAN BEACH GAMES

MONTEVIDEO – About 1,500 sportsmen will take part in the first South American Beach Games from Friday to Dec 13 in Montevideo and Punta del Este, the organising committee reported

Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela will participate in the competition, organised by the Uruguayan Olympic Committee (COU) and the Ministry of Tourism and Sport.

The organising committee also invited athletes from Aruba, Guyana, Panama and Surinam.

The opening ceremony will be in the Arenas del Plata Stadium here, where football, volleyball, handball and rugby competitions will take place. On the other hand, the Punta del Este resort in Maldonado province, 87 miles from here, will be the venue for sailing, surfing, triathlon, swimming and water skiing events. □



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Final exposition by Het Binnenhuys

Stunning exposition by Eefje van der Straten-van Twillert



ORANJESTAD - Respected island artists Eefje van der Straten-van Twillert has put together a relatively small (10 paintings) collection titled "Stone Flowers," which opened on Saturday, November 28, and can be viewed at Het Binnenhuys until the end of

the year. Karin Martens has chosen a spectacular way to close her adorable home-décor center, and sadly, Aruba will see another art gallery gone in 2009.

Art lovers can rejoice in this intriguing collection by Eefje, who is always growing and

testing herself as an artist. In this instance, she took photographs of rock formations around the island in which she perceived other objects, much like imagining clouds form people or animals in the sky. The composition of the various natural cliffs and rock collections suggested to Eefje groupings of flowers, hence the name "Stone Flowers" for this new collection. Leaning towards the impressionistic, they are rendered in pastels for the most part, though there are some very dramatic pieces employing vivid hues and bold strokes.

Het Binnenhuys also features four other works by Eefje with this collection, and the walls of the shop display a number of other fine pieces by local artists, including quite a few lovely paintings by Marty Relan, who is fascinated by



seashells and their structure.

Het Binnenhuys is located on the Avenida Milio Croes near Kooyman, and can be contacted at telephone

582-3374 to schedule an appointment or cell # 734-9166. Eefje's work can also be seen online at www.eefje-art.com. □



Aruba Foundation E FARO together with Hairdresserscommemorate World Aids Day



Continued from Front Page
On December first the whole world celebrated World Aids Day and the theme chosen by the United Nations for this year is 'Universal Access

and Human Rights to emphasize the importance to work towards universal access to HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment and care, recognizing these as fundamental human rights. The goal is helping switch the negative approach towards HIV/AIDS infected persons, and as a first step, achieve a positive change of mattitude in our community where we are able to show compassion,

understanding and support. Mr. Henry Valdez of Cache Boutique who is a well-known hairdresser for "Miss" competitions decided to repeat this activity and every year he sees better results. Ms. Ariadne de Cuba of Ariadnes Kapsalon is also a woman very well-known in the community for her work with Carnival together with Ms. Marietta Wanopa of Marietta's Unisex Beauty Shop who volunteers with the Red Cross also participated in this awareness day like

years before.. Knipoog and Hairfashion also joined in the activity.□

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PALM BEACH— The health and calorie conscious among us need fear steakhouses no more. Whether it's a low-carb, low-fat, or even vegetarian diet you follow, Texas de Brazil Churrascaria fits into just about every dieter's menu plan.

Low carb eaters will have all their expectations surpassed with a tempting carnivorous selection of umpteen cuts of sizzling beef, pork, lamb, sausage, and poultry. The meats are prepared in the healthiest style of cooking—slow roasting—where much of the fat drips off in the roasting process, so those looking for a lower fat option to sautéing, pan frying, or deep frying will also be able to indulge.

The Brazilian-style steakhouse also offers a garden full of healthy eats on a lavish 40-item seasonal salad bar, giving dieters plenty to choose from to accompany the

Restaurant open daily
Monday - Sat 6 pm - 11
Sunday 5 pm - 11 pm

For more information or to make reservations, please call 586-4686.□



BISTRO TASTE OF BELGIUM

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PALM BEACH - Taste of Belgium's Bistro is located in the intimate courtyard of the Paseo Herencia Mall across from the Holiday Inn Resort. It is cozy and casual: one can have a drink with friends, have a quick bite before grabbing a movie or relax and lounge away the afternoon and evening in the balmy breeze underneath the stars. The Bistro's great selection of Belgian beers has drawn many beer lovers to the mall already, but it is its exquisite food, ample portions and great prices that keep folks coming back for more every night of the week.

presentation, an awesome side dish, a stunning combination, a surprising regional dish or a dessert that takes you to heaven and back a few times. Good service and lots of smiles will surely make the Bistro one of your favorite places to go to. Open for coffee, lunch, drinks, dinner and cocktails.

Early Bird
When the rays of the sun start fading and the shadows grow a bit longer, many choose for an exceptionally good option for dinner: the Early Bird Special! The restaurant's sundown, 3-course menu is spectacular and its price can't be beat for \$ 25.00.
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The Bistro's menu offers everyone's favorites, but with a culinary Belgian twist. This might be an unusual

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Motto at Driftwood Restaurant: "From the pier to your plate!"

ORANJESTAD - The downtown marina is home of **Driftwood Fishing Charters**, the successful fishermen of the established seafood restaurant **Driftwood** in Oranjestad.

Driftwood owner Herby Merryweather has a love and passion for fishing. A fisherman who knows about fish, what our local waters have to offer, and what the words



"fresh seafood" really mean. What Herby catches will be served in his restaurant on

the same day. Herby loves to share his fishing passion with the many visitors to the island. His fleet of a 35 ft. Twin Engine Bertram yacht and a 50 ft. Twin Engine Post yacht, appropriately called "Driftwood I and II, is available for charters on a daily basis from 8am to

Catch your own dinner

12 noon and from 1pm to 5pm. A charter includes: captain, mate, all fishing equipment, bait, sodas and bottled water. On a full day charter sandwiches and snacks are also included. You can call Herby directly at (297) 592 4040 or go to www.driftwoodaruba.com.

Rates:

\$380 - 1/2 day

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Rates per boat

Max. 6 people



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Driftwood Restaurant

This authentic Aruban seafood restaurant is located in characteristic downtown Oranjestad. Their extended

menu has been jubled by many. Driftwood offers daily specials, as well as a delicious 3-course menu for just \$24.

Driftwood Restaurant

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Need to continue battle stressed at World AIDS Day ceremony



PHILIPSBURG--The need to continue the fight against HIV/AIDS and for individuals to take responsibility for their sexual practices were among the messages stressed by officials during the official ceremony to mark World AIDS Day on Tuesday.

Members of the Island and Executive Councils were also pinned by representatives of St. Maarten's HIV/AIDS Programme Management Team (PMT) in a show of appreciation for their support in the fight against the pandemic. Pinned were Lt. Governor Franklyn Richards, Leader of Government William Marlin, Health Commissioner Hyacinth Richardson, Democratic Party (DP) Leader Island Councilwoman Sarah Wescot-Williams, former Health Commissioner and DP Island Councilwoman Maria Buncamper-Molanus and Health Sector Director Jorien Wuite.

Richardson also made a US \$500 pledge to the Stronger Together Red Ribbon Campaign, which wrapped up yesterday. The Commissioner's pledge, along with about US \$7,000 raised by Leader of Government William Marlin during a mini radiothon on Tuesday helped the campaign reach its US \$25,000 target (see related story).

In his presentation, Richardson spoke about safe sex practices. He implored the community to be conscious about healthy sexual encounters and to take responsibility for its actions.

"We must teach each other to be responsible for our own actions. We cannot and should not rely on others to be responsible for our health and wellbeing," he said.

Commending the team fuelling awareness of HIV/AIDS in St. Maarten, Richardson expressed hope that their efforts would have a lasting effect. "As a community, let us work stronger together in the fight against HIV in St. Maarten and the rest of the world," he said.

Marlin said while there had been more awareness over the years the fight should not stop. He alluded to the level of stigma, discrimination and shame associated with the virus in the earlier days. "We need to continue the battle not just against HIV/AIDS but against the ignorance that existed and that still exists," he said. "We are glad that the [level of] information is stepping up."

Richards said it was time we took stock and looked ahead at what else could be done to create awareness about this disease. "AIDS has taken a toll on communities all around the world. Generations of people have died, leaving a growing number of old people and children dependent on a shrinking labour force in some countries," he said.

"Millions of children have lost a parent to AIDS. They have lost a best friend, a hand to squeeze, a kiss good night, and the whisper of words of encouragement that a parent would tell a son or daughter.

"Much has been done to create awareness about HIV/AIDS, but this disease remains a threat to men, women and children around the world, including here in St. Maarten," he noted.

"While treatment of AIDS is the key to keeping people living with AIDS today alive, prevention is the key to achieving an AIDS-free generation tomorrow. That is what both public and private sectors are moving towards," Richards said.

"However, prevention will not be successful unless our community changes its behaviour. The talk about sexuality and sexual relations, with emphasis on

safe, respectful, and consensual sexual behaviour, has to be part of the discussion that will result in behavioural change.

"Some people get embarrassed when talking about sex. Others have a problem with it. Abstinence is fine for those who are able or can abstain, but condoms prevent the spread of the infection for those who can't. In countries where there is much greater openness and honesty about the nature of the threat that HIV presents, progress is being made," Richards noted.

He said the AIDS epidemic could be beaten if more effort

were ploughed into the fight. "No continent, country, or community has escaped the vicious trail of the AIDS virus. Let us band together with the objective 'Universal Access and Human Rights' in mind in 2010, as the best way to respond to this challenge is to act responsibly locally, and to collaborate globally."

The Health Care Sector, the local AIDS Programme Management Team, St. Maarten AIDS Foundation and all sponsors and volunteers were praised by the officials present for their work in fuelling the fight against AIDS. □





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Testing to be major focus of AIDS awareness campaign

~ 'Act Red, Go Test,' theme for 2010 ~

PHILIPSBURG--Large scale testing campaigns will be a predominant feature in next year's HIV/AIDS public awareness campaign, launched on World AIDS Day, Tuesday.

Themed "Act Red, Go Test," the campaign is the third part of the Programme Management Team (PMT) RED drive geared towards creating awareness about the pandemic. The World AIDS Day activities also included a march organised by NAGICO Insurances and supported by workers of Windward Islands Bank (WIB), Ennia Insurances, TelEm, utilities company GEBE and Scotiabank.

The 2010 campaign will focus heavily on encouraging persons in the community to get tested and know their status.

St. Maarten's HIV/AIDS Programme Manager Suzette Moses-Burton

said four quarterly large scale public testing days will be held next year. The first will coincide with the Lions Club Health Fair on March 27 and the second with Scotiabank's regional testing day on June 27. The other two testing days are still to be determined.

Moses-Burton said that, as in previous years, the PMT would be working with the private sector and businesses would be pooling their resources to hold the public testing days. They also will encourage their employees and customers to get tested during their "Red" months and will continue their in-house awareness campaigns.

The Act Red, Go Test campaign is a follow-up to earlier campaigns: Talk Red in 2007, which encouraged the public to talk about HIV/AIDS and not make it taboo, and the Think Red,

Do Safe campaign in 2008, which encouraged members of the public to think before they act.

Alluding to a commitment she said had been made by Leader of Government William Marlin to serve as an example in the fight against AIDS, Moses-Burton challenged other island leaders and media representatives to present a public face at the testing campaigns and agree to come forward and be tested.

"We want the community to see persons in authority set the example by leading by example and not be afraid to be publicly tested for HIV/AIDS," she said. "We have to continue to dispel the myths that testing is for 'those' people. Those people are all of us and unless we start to address those issues, we'll never get where we want to go, so I

am issuing a challenge to all present as we move forward in year three and this is also including members of the media."

Former health commissioner Maria Buncamper-Molanus had stepped forward and

was publicly tested during the Lions Health Fair in March.

The 2008 Talk Red public awareness campaign reached some 7,000 persons: 3,000 workers and 4,000 customers. □

William's challenge rakes in more than \$9,000 for AIDS

~ Red Ribbon reaches US \$25,000 target ~

PHILIPSBURG--The Stronger Together Red Ribbon Campaign has met its target, thanks to the efforts of Leader of Government Commissioner William Marlin on Tuesday.

Marlin hit the airwaves yesterday, challenging the community to support the cause and in a little over half an hour US \$7,086 (including US \$1,000 from the Commissioner) had been raised for the campaign, which up to Sunday had been US \$5,000 shy of its US \$25,000 target.

Tuesday's mini radio-thon began with Marlin challenging radio listeners to make pledges, which he said he would match. He matched the first ten pledges of US \$100 with a donation of US \$1,000.

He then challenged listeners to match pledges made by callers to the station. Scores of persons in the community responded to the challenge, including businesspersons and prominent persons in the community.

At the end of the event US \$6,975 and NAF. 200 (US \$111) had been pledged over the

airwaves for the Red Ribbon Campaign, which wrapped up on Tuesday evening.

A similar challenge during Scotiabank and the St. Maarten AIDS Foundation radio-thon on Sunday raised US \$2,000 for the campaign – for a total of over US \$9,000 raised.

Also in the station during yesterday's mini radio-thon was St. Maarten's HIV/AIDS Programme Manager Suzette Moses-Burton; St. Maarten AIDS Foundation President Dr. Gerard van Osch and Trinidadian consultant Salorne McDonald. The mini radio-thon was held during the Club Mix radio programme with Etienne "DJ Kid" Brown on 102.7 FM.

Marlin thanked everyone for their "generous support" and said he was extremely happy that "a promise made again became a promise kept and that the target of raising the US \$25,000 dollars through the Stronger Together campaign was not only been met, but also surpassed." □

Mother says police shot her son in a case of mistaken identity

~ Says son ran because of illegal status ~

PHILIPSBURG--Heather Walker, mother of Jamaican R.S. shot by police on November 24 when he was suspected of robbing a house in Mary's Fancy Estate, claims her son was shot in a case of mistaken identity.

"He was not the right person. He is innocent," Walker told The Daily Herald in an interview Monday. She said her son, who had been locked away in a private room at St. Maarten Medical Centre for about six days while recovering from his gunshot wounds, was recently told by police detectives that he was no longer considered a suspect and was released.

However, Police Spokesperson Ricardo Henson told this newspaper that according to the Prosecutors Office, S. was not yet let off the hook, as the investigation into the attempted robbery was still ongoing.

On that Tuesday, around midday, police had caught a masked man with a gun in a home on Aruba Drive off A. Th. Illidge Road. He had tied up the maid and scared the owner into hiding.

Officers confronted him, but he waved a gun at them. They ran for cover and called for back-up as the robber fled the house through a door in the living room. The robber jumped the fence at the back of the house and fled through the hills towards Mary's Fancy Estate.

Police combed the area for a man fitting the suspect's descriptions until they spotted S. He ran when he saw police coming and officers pursued. Two other police patrols chased S. on Gladiola Road and then officers fired.

According to Walker, her son had been working on a construction project with his uncle Ian Walker in the Mary's Fancy Estate area that day. She said he had left the construction site to go grab a bite to eat when police shot at and hit him.

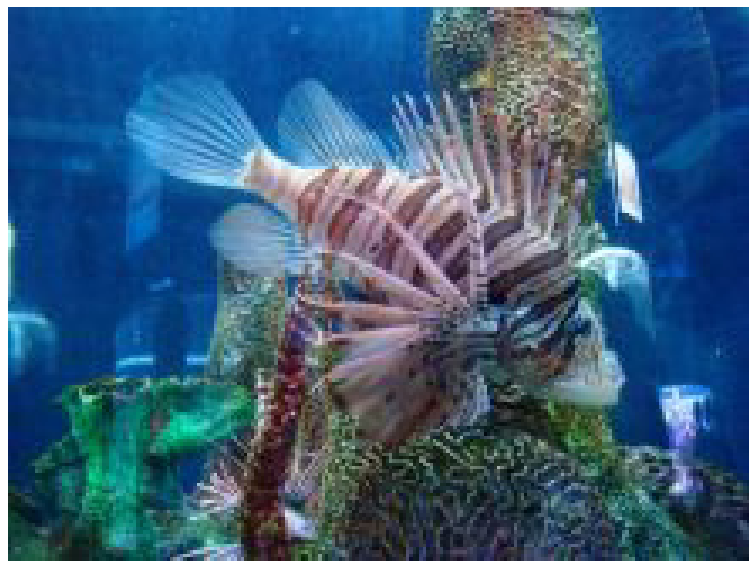
She said her son had run when the police spotted him, because he did not have legal papers to reside on the island. "He happened to just walk into the situation. He tried to get away because of his status," Walker explained her son's reaction.

While this paper reported that S. had been shot in the shoulder, Walker claims her son was shot in the back, where the bullet punctured his lungs as it came out on the front end. She said he was also shot in the foot.

Walker was quite upset that her son had been locked away at the medical centre and had not been able to see or talk to his family for the days while he was there. Moreover, she said she did not find it fair that authorities had made her son sign a statement written in Dutch, which he could not read. Walker met with authorities on Monday. □

ENVIRONMENT:

New Pirate of the Caribbean Invades from Pacific



By Humberto Márquez
CARACAS, Dec 2 (IPS) - The red lionfish (*Pterois volitans*), a venomous coral reef fish from the Indian and western Pacific Oceans, has invaded the waters of the Caribbean and the Gulf of Mexico, threatening to wreak havoc on ecosystems, native fish populations and popular underwater diving areas.

The invasive, exotic-looking fish apparently reached the Caribbean in 1992 when Hurricane Andrew destroyed an aquarium in a restaurant in Florida and six of the ferocious predators got out.

"The lionfish is a beautiful, colourful fish that reaches 45 cm in length, with bold reddish or maroon and white stripes and long, showy pectoral and dorsal fins with dangerous venomous spikes," biologist Juan Posada, head of the organism biology department at the Simon Bolivar University in Caracas, told IPS.

The lionfish was found in the waters around the Bahamas in 2004, near Cuba and the Turks and Caicos Islands in 2007, in Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Belize and the Colombian island of San Andrés in 2008, and off the coasts of Mexico, Honduras, Costa Rica and Panama this year. It most recently turned up in the waters off the Dutch islands of Aruba and Bonaire

in September and October, near Venezuela's northwest coast.

"It may also have reached this area in the ballast waters of a merchant ship, but that is less likely. The lionfish populations probably descended from the specimens that escaped from the aquarium, and have flourished thanks to their specific characteristics and the fact that in the Atlantic Ocean they don't have natural predators, like the big fish in the Pacific," said Posada.

The lionfish "is extremely adaptable, and without predators it easily flourishes over other species," Oscar Lasso, an ichthyologist at the La Salle Foundation of Natural Sciences in Venezuela, told IPS. "In first place it is cryptic, and it preferentially inhabits coral reefs, where it waits for other animals that do not even recognise it as a fish, opens its mouth and eats everything that goes by."

But it can live as deep as 175 metres below the surface, and even young lionfish are protected from other predators by their long, poisonous spines. And as a voracious predator - it eats smaller fish, crabs, shrimp and even young lobster - it poses a serious threat to local fisheries.

"A lionfish's stomach can expand up to 30 times its normal size after it has eaten,"

said Lasso. "In the stomach of one fish caught in the Bahamas, 17 young 3-cm long juvenile snappers were found. While an adult can grow to 38 cm in the Pacific, 45 cm specimens have been found in the Caribbean, which gives you an idea of their success as an invasive species."

They are also prolific breeders, said the expert. A single female can lay up to one million eggs in her lifetime, and because of the warm climate in the Caribbean, they can spawn year-round, giving them a better chance at survival.

The fertilised eggs and newly hatched larvae then drift in the ocean currents, which carry them farther and farther away, fuelling the lionfish population explosion and expansion.

"Based on experience, it is practically impossible to eradicate a successful introduced species; they are here to stay, and we have to learn to live with the problem and try to manage it," said Posada.

Another challenge in fighting the spread of the invasive lionfish population is the venom - mainly consisting of a protein toxin - located in glands at the base of each dorsal spine. Although the venom is rarely fatal to humans, the sting is extremely painful, causing vomiting, dizziness, breathing difficulties, headaches, "and sometimes arrhythmias (irregular heartbeats), and the effects can last for hours, or even days," said Posada.

Treatment for a lionfish sting includes immediate immersion in non-scalding hot water for 30 minutes, because the proteins in the venom are broken down by heat, which prevents them from spreading in the bloodstream. In addition, any broken spines

should be removed from the wound, and the victim can be given a painkiller, said the expert.

"The same principle of denaturing the venom operates in the case of someone who catches a fish and wants to eat it, because lionfish are edible, the meat is tasty," said Posada.

Complaining about the lionfish's destruction of native Atlantic and Caribbean fish species, he joked that "it even occurred to us that one way to get people to capture and eat more lionfish, to reduce the population, would be to spread the rumour that its meat is a powerful aphrodisiac."

Lasso pointed to the destruction caused by exotic species that are transported in the ballast tanks that allow ships to remain stable despite changes in the amount of cargo that they are carrying.

Once the ships unload their cargo, they fill up their tanks with water from the destination point - water that contains billions of organisms, including eggs and larvae from a broad range of sea species. When cargo is loaded, the ballast water is discharged, sometimes halfway across the globe.

That is how, for example, the muzzled blenny (*Omobranchus punctatus*) was apparently brought to Trinidad in the 19th

century on ships from India. The fish has been found in the Gulf of Paria, which separates that Caribbean island from Venezuela, and it competes for habitat with native species - although not with the voracity of the lionfish - from Mexico to Brazil.

Ichthyologists - zoologists who study fish - are trying to raise awareness among fisherpeople, divers, authorities, sailors, coastal communities and the public in general on the risks of introducing exotic species.

The tilapia (*Oreochromis mossambicus*), native to Africa, is a well-known problematic invasive species, in Venezuela and many other countries. It is on the International Union for Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) list of the 100 World's Worst Alien Invasive Species.

Just 12 years after some 800 tilapia were introduced in the Laguna de los Patos, a small lake in northeastern Venezuela, in 1964, only 10 of the 23 native species of fish were left.

The researchers who spoke to IPS underscored the serious harm to native ecosystems that can be caused by releasing non-native pet fish or farmed fish - like tilapia - into the wild, as demonstrated by the lionfish, which according to some experts has the potential to become one of the most catastrophic marine invasions in history. □

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BUSINESS

Aruba TODAY

Stocks waver as job cuts decline last month

By **STEPHEN BERNARD**
and **SARA LEPRO**,
AP Business Writers

NEW YORK – Stocks traded in a tight range Wednesday after a report showed job cuts at private companies slowed last month, but not as much as expected.

Major stock market indexes were mixed after the ADP National Employment Report said 169,000 private sector jobs were lost in November, fewer than the 195,000 jobs that were lost in October but worse than the 160,000 cuts expected by economists polled by Thomson Reuters.

The eighth straight drop in job losses at private companies provided the latest evidence that the economy is recovering, but at a slow pace. Investors are keenly focused on the job market, which remains in a funk despite signs of life in manufacturing, housing and other parts of the economy.

“It all falls apart if you don’t get jobs to come around,” said Bill Stone, chief investment strategist at PNC Wealth

Management.

The ADP report, while it doesn’t represent the entire economy, is often seen as a good indicator of what will emerge in the government’s closely watched monthly employment report, which is due on Friday. Economists are expecting the unemployment rate remained flat at 10.2 percent last month.

In other trading, the dollar rose slightly against other major currencies, while Treasuries were mixed.

Later Wednesday, investors will look to the Federal Reserve’s assessment of regional economic activity for further insight into the strength of the recovery.

Trading has been volatile in recent days as investors try to assess whether the massive gains in the stock market since early March accurately reflect the economy’s strength. Investors have been worried that the nascent recovery could be threatened by economic problems overseas or missteps by the government and the

resulting impact on the dollar. Worries over a potential debt crisis in Dubai caused a temporary halt in buying last week.

In midafternoon trading, the Dow Jones industrial average fell 22.90, or 0.2 percent, to 10,448.68. The Standard & Poor’s 500 index fell 0.80, or 0.1 percent, to 1,108.06, and the Nasdaq composite index rose 7.34, or 0.3 percent, to 2,183.15.

The seesaw trading followed a surge in stocks on Tuesday that was driven by a weaker dollar and higher commodities prices. The Dow rose 126 points and traded above the 10,500 level for the first time since October last year. A months-long slide in the dollar, the result of rock-bottom interest rates, has encouraged investors to buy riskier assets that have the potential to earn better returns.

Analysts say trading likely will remain choppy through the rest of the year due to opposing forces in the market. Some investors are exiting the



FILE - In this Sept. 15, 2008 file photo, a Wall St. street sign is seen near the New York Stock Exchange in New York. Investors are making few moves in early trading Wednesday, Dec. 2, 2009, after a private group’s report showed job cuts declined in November for the eighth straight month, but not as much as forecast.

(AP Photo/Jin Lee, file)

market, looking to lock in the gains they’ve amassed since the rally began in March, while others who may have missed out are looking to get in.

Trading in foreign exchange, commodities and debt markets was mixed as traders remained cautious.

“People don’t know where to go,” Stone said. “That wait-and-see attitude has kicked in.” The ICE Futures US dollar index, which measures the dollar against other major currencies, edged up 0.3 percent. The yield on the benchmark 10-year Treasury

note, which moves opposite its price, fell to 3.28 percent from 3.29 percent late Tuesday.

Gold prices surged to a new high of \$1,218.40 an ounce, while oil prices fell \$1.79 to \$76.58 a barrel on the New York Mercantile Exchange.

Three stocks rose for every two that fell on the New York Stock Exchange, where volume came to 568.8 million shares compared with 607.5 million shares at the same time on Tuesday.

In other trading, the Russell 2000 index of smaller companies rose 5.27, or 0.9 percent, to 594.47. □

Unemployment rises in almost half of metro areas

By **CHRISTOPHER S. RUGABER**,
AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON – Unemployment worsened or stayed the same in most metro areas in October, the Labor Department said Wednesday, as jobs remained scarce nationwide.

The report comes a day before the Obama administration is to hold a “jobs summit” at the White House that will gather economists, academics and corporate executives to consider how the government can spur job creation.

The jobless rate rose in 162 of the 372 metro areas tracked by the Labor Department. The rate was unchanged in 42 areas. It dropped in 168 areas.

In September, unemployment had improved in 223 areas and worsened in only 123. The deteriorating trend mirrors the U.S. unemployment rate, which jumped to 10.2 percent in October from 9.8 percent in September.

The metro unemployment data isn’t seasonally adjusted and is therefore volatile from month-to-month. All 372 areas reported higher unemployment rates in October compared with the previous year.

The Labor Department is scheduled to release the national unemployment report for November on Friday. Wall Street economists expect it will show the jobless rate was unchanged at 10.2 percent while employers shed 130,000 jobs, according to Thomson Reuters. There were 190,000 job cuts in October.

Fifteen areas recorded jobless rates of 15 percent or worse in October, the department said, with nine of those in California and three in Michigan. That’s up from 13 areas with rates above 15 percent the previous month.

Fresno, Calif., for example, saw its jobless rate soar to 15.8 percent from 14 percent in September. And the rate in Hanford-Corcoran, Calif., jumped to 15.5

percent from 13.9 percent.

The areas with the biggest increases were: Waterloo-Cedar Falls, Iowa, which soared to 8 percent from 5.6 percent; Ocean City, N.J., to 10.6 percent from 8.5 percent; and Sandusky, Ohio, to 10.9 percent from 9.5 percent.

The largest improvements were in: Lawrence, Kan., where the rate fell to 4.7 percent from 5.4 percent; Ames, Iowa, to 4 percent from 4.5 percent; and Boston-Cambridge-Quincy, Mass., to 7.9 percent from 8.8 percent.

El Centro, Calif., and Yuma, Ariz. posted the nation’s highest jobless rates of 30 and 23.5 percent, respectively.

The two adjacent counties are heavily agricultural and have many seasonal farm workers.

Bismarck, N.D., recorded the nation’s lowest rate, at 2.8 percent, followed by Fargo and Grand Forks, N.D., both at 3.5 percent. □



In this publicity image released by NBC Universal, actress Meredith Baxter, left, is shown during an interview with Matt Lauer on the 'Today' show, Wednesday, Dec. 2, 2009, in New York.

(AP Photo/NBC, Peter Kramer)

Actress Meredith Baxter reveals she is a lesbian

NEW YORK — Meredith Baxter, who played mother Elyse Keaton on the 1980s TV series "Family Ties," has revealed that she is a lesbian.

"I am a lesbian, and it was a later-in-life recognition of that fact," the 62-year-old actress said in an interview Wednesday on NBC's "Today" show.

Baxter said she has been in a relationship with her girlfriend, a general contractor, for four years.

"Some people are saying, were you living a lie? And, you know, the truth is, not at all. This has only been in the past seven years," she said.

Baxter has been married three times, including to David Birney, her co-star on the '70s TV series "Bridget Loves Bernie." She is the mother of five children.

Baxter said she is "extraordinarily happy" and the support from her family and friends was immediate and unqualified. □

Walters' 'Fascinating People' include Jackson kids



FILE — In this July 7, 2009 file photo, Paris Jackson, left, Prince Michael Jackson II and Prince Michael Jackson I, stand on the stage during the memorial service for Michael Jackson at the Staples Center in Los Angeles.

(AP Photo/Mark J. Terrill, file)

NEW YORK — Michael Jackson's children are among Barbara Walters' most

fascinating people of the year.

ABC says Walters' upcoming special, "The 10 Most Fascinating People of 2009," will include a profile of the late King of Pop's kids: Paris, Prince Michael and Prince Michael II (known as Blanket).

The list also includes pop-culture sensation Lady Gaga (GAH'-gah), famous mother of eight Kate Gosselin (GAHS'-lihn), glam rocker Adam Lambert, record-breaking NFL quarterback Brett Favre (farv), South Carolina's first lady Jenny Sanford, comedian-filmmaker Tyler Perry, TV pundit Glenn Beck and former vice presidential candidate Sarah Palin.

The 10th fascinating person will be announced on the show, which airs Dec. 9. □

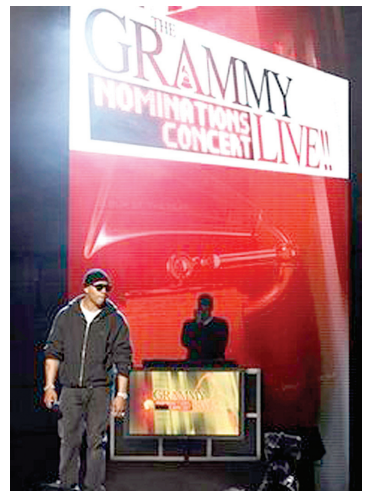
LL Cool J primed for Grammy nominations concert

By DERRIK J. LANG, AP Entertainment Writer
LOS ANGELES — LL Cool J is paying tribute the best way he knows how.

The 41-year-old rapper-actor will kick off "The Grammy Nominations Concert Live! — Countdown to Music's Biggest Night" on Wednesday night by rapping to a medley of the past year's hits from artists like Lady Gaga and Kings of Leon. Sample lyric: "It's not Hugh Jackman — Yes, it's a black man."

"It was an interesting challenge," the "NCIS: Los Angeles" co-star and nominations show host said during a break from rehearsals late Tuesday at Club Nokia. "How can I pay homage to these artists but not ruin their songs and bring my own flavor to it and make it original?"

Other performers on the show include Nick Jonas and The Administration, R&B crooner Maxwell, country duo Sugarland and the hip-hop foursome Black Eyed Peas.



Host LL Cool J is seen while rehearsing a segment for the Grammy Nominations Concert Live in Los Angeles on Tuesday, Dec. 1, 2009. The Grammy Nominations Live Concert will take place Wednesday, Dec. 2 in Los Angeles.

(AP Photo/Matt Sayles)

Presenters such as Katy Perry, T-Pain, George Lopez and Ringo Starr are scheduled to announce Grammy nominees in about a half-dozen categories.

The Black Eyed Peas will have a little digital help from their friends when they perform "I Gotta Feeling." At one point during their routine, a video of folks singing along — including celebs like Chris Daughtry and Seth Green — will blast on a flat-screen behind them.

For their performance, Sugarland will take it to the courtyard outside Club Nokia underneath a sparkly Christmas tree. Maxwell also plans to step outside the concert's intimate setting inside Club Nokia — complete with tables topped with chilled champagne and glitter.

Likely nominees include those name-dropped in LL Cool J's opening number. Among them: Taylor Swift, the country princess who recently swept the American Music Awards with five wins. Launched last year instead of a pre-dawn press conference, the nominations special, which will air on CBS, is the Recording Academy's prime-time opportunity to announce top nominees from over 100 categories. The 52nd annual Grammy Awards ceremony will be held Jan. 31 at the Staples Center. □



FILE — In this June 7, 2008 file photo, actor Orlando Bloom arrives at the Raisa Gorbachev Foundation Gala dinner in Hampton, in Surrey, England. (AP Photo/Kirsty Wigglesworth, file)

By ANTHONY MCCARTNEY, AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES — Four people accused of breaking into the homes of celebrities including Paris Hilton and Lindsay Lohan pleaded not guilty Wednesday to charges they stole \$3 million in jewelry, designer clothes and other items.

The suspects include 19-year-olds Nicholas Prugo, Diana Tamayo and Courtney Leigh Ames and 27-year-old Roy Lopez Jr. All four are charged with felony burglary.

A judge on Tuesday ordered a fifth defendant, Alexis Neiers, to stand trial on a felony

burglary charge related to a break-in at Orlando Bloom's home. She previously pleaded not guilty to the July break-in.

Prugo faces the most charges: seven counts of first-degree burglary for break-ins at the homes of stars including Lohan, Hilton, Bloom and Rachel Bilson.

Prugo's attorney, Sean Erenstoft, has asked that his client's case be separated from the rest of the group, arguing that Prugo's statements to authorities already had been used at Neiers' preliminary hearing.

Prugo confessed to detectives about the burglaries and implicated several suspects, according to a Las Vegas search warrant released last month. He placed blame for the thefts on Rachel J. Lee, a Las Vegas woman who has not been charged.

Superior Court Commissioner Donald Kennedy denied Erenstoft's motion Wednesday, saying it was premature.

Lopez's attorney, David D. Diamond, denied after Wednesday's hearing that his client was involved in a break-in at Hilton's home.

"My client was never in or near Paris Hilton's house," Diamond said.

The four who pleaded not guilty Wednesday are next scheduled in court at a hearing on Jan. 21. Neiers is due back in court on Dec. 15. □

HEALTH

Aruba TODAY

Growing Up with HIV

Zarina Geloo,

Inter Press Service

LUSAKA - Sixteen-year-old Andela Milambo* wants a husband. She is not looking for love, but for someone to share the burden of living with HIV. She wants to be able to take her medicine without having to hide, to discuss the recurring herpes with someone who understands.

Living with HIV since the age of six, she wants someone else to make the decisions, "while I read a magazine."

Milambo, says she got infected through a contaminated needle.

She describes a life dominated by the fear of dying from AIDS but says the worst times are when she gets herpes flare-ups that make it hard to walk, talk or eat.

She skips school often due to "small illnesses" like colds which are usually accompanied by a bad cough that debilitate her body. Her grades are bad and she has little hope of obtaining a full certificate when she completes secondary school next year. "But that's alright, I was not intending to go to college anyway."

She has made no lasting friendships for fear that people will find out her HIV status. While her parents and a few close relatives who know her condition try to offer support, they actually make things worse, she says.

"I see them just age in front of me when I am sick, they get so stressed and sad, I prefer to suffer in silence."

She hears how young people talk about HIV and AIDS and the level of discrimination and ignorance frightens her. "I can never confide in a young person that I am positive, the stigma would kill me faster than AIDS."

Milambo envies other young girls going to movies, laughing, dancing. She has no time for that, she says, because

she has to work to save her life. Instead she does "boring" things like peer education for her local clinic.

Rather wryly, she says, "Though I say it's boring, the clinic is the one place I feel comfortable at. As a peer educator I have the run of the place with no questions asked. So treatment and information for me is free and easy to get."

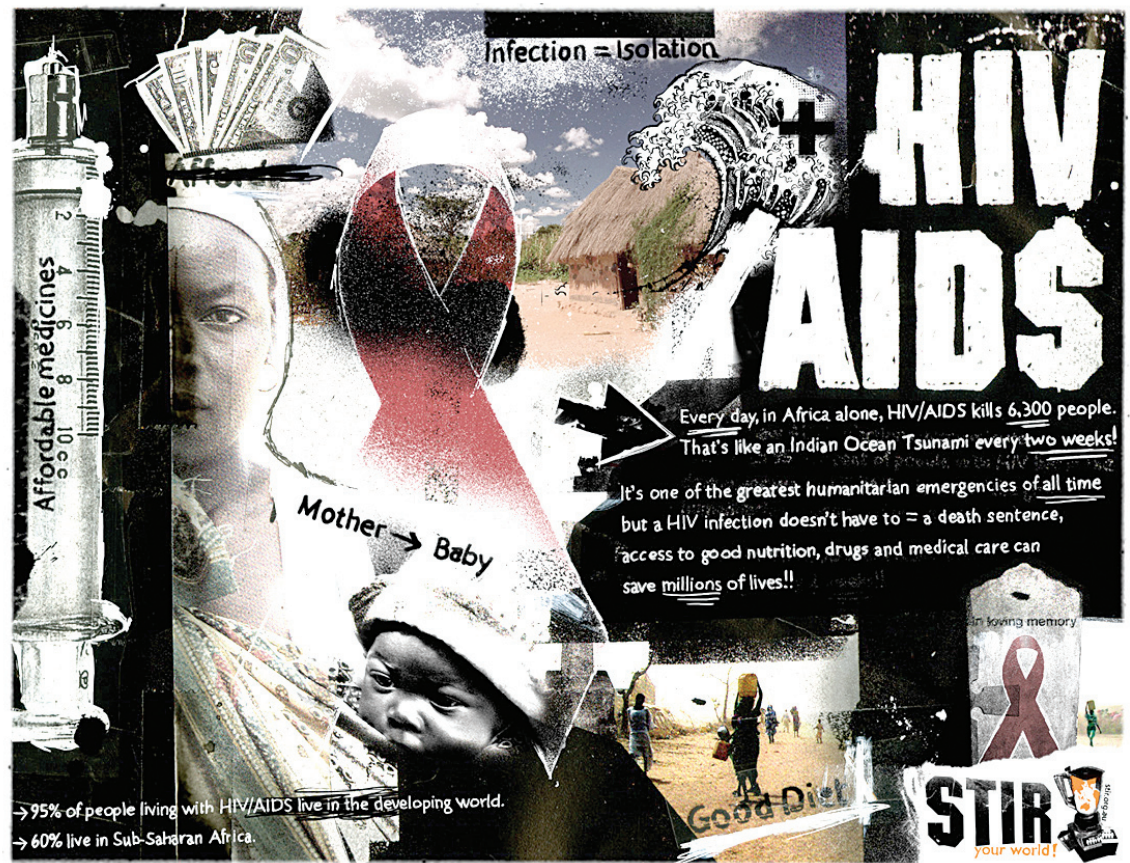
It is also the place Milambo is looking for a husband. "Men at the clinic are knowledgeable and because they work around HIV, they are compassionate. When I turn 18 I will choose one. As head of household, my husband will make the decisions regarding our welfare, while I watch television or read a fashion magazine... being married would make me a "proper person" because everyone aspires to be married, at least that's the one thing I can achieve."

James Banda also wants a normal life. The eighteen-year-old is openly living with HIV and confines himself to dating HIV positive girls because he hates having to explain to every new girl why he has to take pills on a regular basis. The girls usually run away from him after that, he says. "The ones that stick around see me as a charity challenge and I am their good Christian deed."

Infected with HIV on his first sexual encounter, his life's mission now is to find a girl with whom he can have a child.

Banda says after his diagnosis he did things "by the book."

"I went for rigorous counseling, came out in a big way, telling anyone that would listen about my status, I did the whole nine yards. I was celebrated by NGOs who made me the poster boy of an HIV positive youth. But after a while, the novelty wore



off and I got tired of always talking about HIV as if that's what defines me."

He says there are times when he wishes he had not disclosed his status. Like when he goes to a disco and people come up to him to caution him not to drink, or whisper that he shouldn't be there, that he has not "learnt his lesson."

"The books on living positively with HIV says I should continue to live as much of a normal life as possible. The reality is different; there can never be anything normal about my life."

Bouts of opportunistic infections, always being on the lookout for a cure or better therapy, not being able to plan ahead ten or even twenty years are some of the things that make his life abnormal, Banda says.

Having passed his school leaving exams with distinction, he is going to college next year to study accounting. He says he has it all; the support of his family, a few good friends and good future prospects. But living with HIV "is still damn hard."

Living with HIV in secrecy is what is harder still for Adam Malik*.

Drinking himself "senseless once in a while" is how Malik copes with his situation. A Zambian of Indian extraction, he lives in the close knit community that refuses to acknowledge HIV in their midst and openly stigmatises people with HIV.

Eighteen-year-old Malik knows this only too well, that's why not even his parents know that he contracted HIV at the age of 14 from the house maid with whom he had a sexual relationship for over a year, and has recently started treatment.

Malik says because he has always been a quiet solitary kind of person, no one notices when he is depressed or feeling unwell. He has not suffered any of the major opportunistic infections.

But, he adds: "Keeping such a secret is a heavy burden. I suffer tension headaches and have developed a facial tick from the stress."

Malik says he is fortunate Zambia has an efficient roll out for ARVs. He was surprised how easy it was to get onto the programme. Of course he chose an out of the way clinic where no one was likely to recognise him.

He reads up on the latest treatments but does not go for counseling as he is scared of being recognised.

Malik is also frightened that he will be coerced into jumping onto the HIV conference circuit as a young HIV positive Indian male. "I will be a novelty that the AIDS activists will not be able to resist. They will show me around like a trophy. I have seen it happen to youth who have come out."

His life on the outside has not changed, he says.

He is still the good son, taking his mother and sisters shopping, helping his father in the family store, hanging out with the boys on a Friday night.

Soon a wife will be chosen for him and he will be expected to have children, he says. He wonders what will happen then. "It will kill my mother to know that I have HIV. My father will kick me out of his home. My sisters' chances of a good marriage will be ruined. When I think of all this, I hit the bottle to forget."

He knows that this will interfere with the efficacy of his medication, but finds it's the only way he can cope. "I am frightened," Malik says. □



Defense Secretary Robert Gates, from left, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Adm. Mike Mullen, testify on Capitol Hill in Washington, Wednesday, Dec. 2, 2009, before the House Foreign Affairs Committee hearing on U.S. strategy in Afghanistan.

Associated Press

Democrats resign themselves to Obama war plan

ANNE FLAHERTY
PAULINE JELINEK
Associated Press Writers

WASHINGTON (AP) — A deeply skeptical Congress on Wednesday resigned itself to President Barack Obama's escalation of the Afghanistan war, while the president's chief military and diplomatic advisers sought to cool any expectations that the war would end in two years.

Leading Democrats said they had serious misgivings about the deployment of 30,000 more troops but would not try to stop the deployments or block the \$30 billion the military will need. Opposition Republicans said they support the force increase even as they questioned Obama's July 2011 deadline to start bringing troops home.

Obama announced his strategy in a speech Tuesday night after three months of careful deliberation, and the response was the best he could have hoped for from a Congress sharply divided on the war.

In House and Senate hearings on Wednesday, Obama's advisers warned that the stakes were great.

Defense Secretary Robert Gates said losing the war "would have severe consequences for the United States and the world."

The testimony was aimed at building support among war-weary lawmakers for

Obama's dramatic rewrite of the battle plan in Afghanistan. By the end of next summer, the president plans to increase to 100,000 the number of U.S. troops there, marking the largest expansion of the war since it began eight years ago. The new strategy also relies on a pledge by NATO to commit an additional 5,000 to 7,000 troops.

With voter support of the war on the decline, Democrats sought assurances that Obama's target date to begin withdrawing troops was firm and that the focus would remain on training Afghan security forces.

"It seems to me that the large influx of U.S. combat troops will put more U.S. Marines on street corners in Afghan villages, with too few Afghan partners alongside them," said Democratic Sen. Carl Levin, chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee.

Republicans objected to the setting of a hard deadline for withdrawing troops and said Obama must be willing to delay the start of a pullout if security deteriorates.

"We don't want to sound an uncertain trumpet to our friends in the region," said John McCain, the Senate panel's top Republican and Obama's opponent in last year's presidential race.

Gates suggested the withdrawal start date was both firm and flexible, frustrating lawmakers who said that wasn't possible.

Continued on Next Page

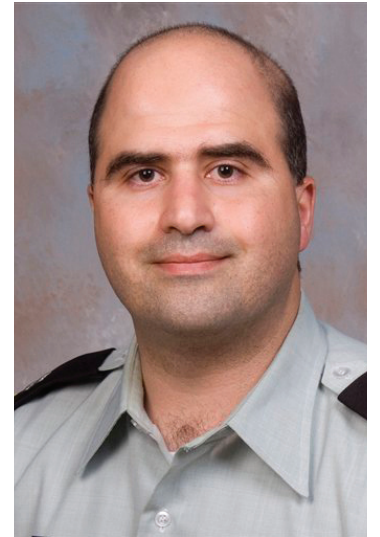
Fort Hood suspect charged with attempted murder

By ANGELA K. BROWN,
Associated Press Writer

FORT WORTH, Texas — An Army psychiatrist was charged Wednesday with 32 counts of attempted premeditated murder in the deadly mass shooting at Fort Hood that also injured more than two dozen soldiers and two civilian police officers, military officials said.

Maj. Nidal Hasan has already been charged with 13 counts of premeditated murder after the Nov. 5 shooting in a building at the Texas base where soldiers must go before being deployed. Witnesses said he jumped on a desk and shouted "Allahu Akbar!" — Arabic for "God is great!"

Continued on Page B3



The 2007 picture provided by the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences shows Nidal Hasan when he entered the program for his Disaster and Military Psychiatry Fellowship.

Associated Press



British sailors, from left to right, Sam Usher, Oliver Smith, David Bloomer, Oliver Young and Luke Porter, pose together on the dock side in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, after being released by Iran, Wednesday, Dec. 2, 2009. Iran freed five British sailors detained last week when their racing yacht drifted accidentally into Iranian waters in the Persian Gulf. Britain said it was delighted with Wednesday's release and praised Tehran's handling of the incident.

Associated Press

Iran releases 5 British sailors detained at sea

Read Page B6

OBAMA WAR PLAN*Continued from Page B1*

When pressed, Gates said the beginning of drawing down troops would not necessarily be based on conditions in Afghanistan and that the president was committed to begin pulling at least some troops out by the target date. At the same time, the president will have the authority to change gears after the Defense Department conducts a formal assessment in December 2010.

"We're not just going to throw these guys in the swimming pool and walk away," Gates said of the Afghan security force.

Gates said the July 2011 date was chosen because it would give the Marines two years to complete a security push in Helmand province that began last July.

"I do not believe we have locked ourselves into leaving. But what we have done ... is to signal very clearly to all audiences that the United States is not interested in

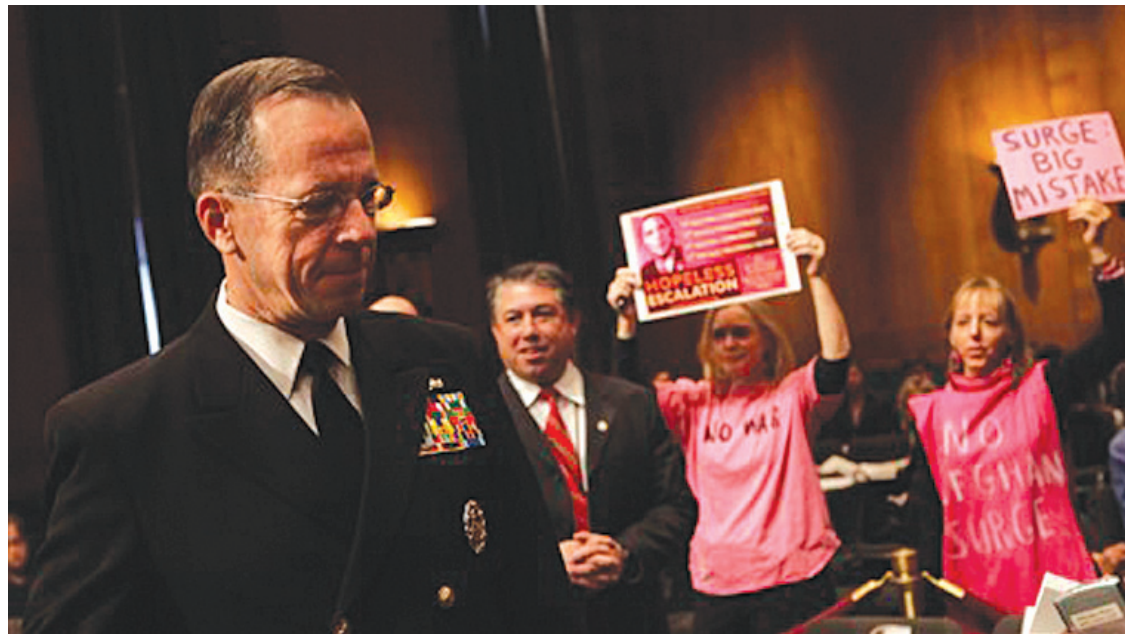
occupying Afghanistan," Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton added.

As part of a full-court press by the White House to make the case for Obama's new strategy, Gates, Clinton and Adm. Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, argued for the troop increase. But they were careful with their words so as not to aggravate divisions on the issue.

Clinton and Gates cast the war situation as serious but not hopeless. Mullen said the Taliban had recaptured ground in Afghanistan — gaining "dominant influence" in 11 of 34 provinces — but could be defeated with enough resources and time.

"While there are no guarantees in war, I expect that we will make significant headway in the next 18-24 months," he said.

Gates told lawmakers that the situation is far less dire than the violent chaos that gripped Iraq in 2006. Still, he said, "This will take more patience, perseverance and sacrifice by



the United States and our allies."

The buildup also will put more strain on troops by giving them less time than hoped for at home.

Mullen said supplying the extra forces for Afghanistan while there are still so many troops in Iraq will mean putting off for a couple of years the goal of lengthening the time they rest and retrain at home between tours of duty — a period the military calls "dwell time." The Army had been moving toward giving two years of dwell time between each one-year tour.

After meeting Wednesday with Karzai, U.S. Gen. Stanley McChrystal called Karzai's reaction to the new U.S. strategy "really

positive. The president was very upbeat, very resolute this morning."

NATO Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen said he expected the allies to bolster the American buildup with more than 5,000 additional troops. Gates said the allies would remain focused on the less volatile north and west of Afghanistan to "prevent the insurgency from establishing new footholds," while Americans focus on the south and east. French President Nicolas Sarkozy hailed Obama's speech as "courageous, determined and lucid" but stopped short of pledging additional French troops. □

Palin book tour host to foreign press: stay away



By ALAN SCHER ZAGIER, Associated Press Writer
SPRINGFIELD, Mo. — She's no longer the chief executive of Alaska, but Sarah Palin should still be called "governor." And in

English only, please.

That was the message sent out by officials at the Mall of America this week, who told reporters planning to cover the Minneapolis-area stop on Palin's "Going

Rogue" book tour they must address the 2008 GOP vice presidential candidate by her former title. The guidelines also banned foreign reporters, allowing "only English speaking

press."

Mall officials said the guidelines were a mistake, and apologized Wednesday to Palin for the mix up, which they called "an internal miscommunication" that was "inadvertently distributed."

"That should never have been in any kind of press release," said Tina Andreadis, a publicist for publisher HarperCollins in New York, who added foreign reporters would be welcome at Palin's Mall of America stop.

"That's not the message the governor wants to send out," she said.

The guidelines were likely to be mostly irrelevant either way. Palin hasn't been speaking to most reporters — either local or from abroad — during her tightly controlled, stay-on-message book tour. A speech scheduled for Wednesday night at the private College of the Ozarks in southwest

Missouri was expected to draw a crowd of 5,000, and the school said it agreed to keep out reporters to secure Palin's appearance.

The few media outlets that did manage to gain access to the speech did so by using one of the free tickets given away to the public, and the college asked they not report on Palin's address.

"I can't take their tickets and ask them to leave, but we have asked them (local reporters) not to (attend)," said College of the Ozarks spokeswoman Elizabeth Andrews.

Last week, Army officials initially barred media from attending a Palin book-signing event at North Carolina's Fort Bragg, fearing it might turn political and lead to negative comments directed at President Barack Obama. The Army later relented and allowed coverage of the event, at which Palin did not give a speech. □

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FORT HOOD

Continued from Page B1

Army officials have said he was armed with two pistols, one a semiautomatic capable of firing up to 20 rounds without reloading. The additional charges come less than 24 hours after Hasan's civilian attorney was notified that the Army plans to evaluate Hasan to test his competency to stand trial as well as his mental state at the time of the shooting.

John Galligan, Hasan's attorney, told The Associated Press on Wednesday that Army officials had not returned his calls so he did not know when or where the "mental responsibility" exam would take place. Galligan said he had filed an objection to the evaluation pointing out that Hasan was still in intensive care at a San Antonio military hospital recovering from gunshot wounds that left him paralyzed.

"I'm incensed at the way the military is handling this, serving additional charges on my client when he's in the hospital and defense attorneys are not present," Galligan told The AP by phone from his office near Fort Hood, about 150 miles southwest of Fort Worth. "And nobody will tell me what the plans are for the evaluation."

The results of the mental evaluation could prevent Hasan from being sent to death row or even being tried at all, although those

scenarios are unlikely, experts say.

The exam is done by a board of mental health professionals to determine whether the suspect had a severe mental illness at the time of the crime; if so, his or her clinical psychological diagnosis; whether that prevented him from knowing at the time that his alleged actions were wrong; and if he is competent to stand trial, according to military law.

The evaluation usually takes several days and involves psychological testing and interviews by the board, said Richard Stevens, an attorney who specializes in defending military cases but is not involved in Hasan's case. The board can review any evidence presented by prosecutors and defense attorneys, although the exam is closed to everyone except the doctors and Hasan, Stevens said.

"The government often requests a mental evaluation in cases where (insanity) may be the defense, because they want to know sooner rather than later what the doctors will determine about the defendant's mental status so they feel comfortable proceeding," he said.

If the board decides Hasan is not competent to stand trial, he would be hospitalized until he is found competent, Stevens said.

If it deems that Hasan had a severe mental illness but did not lack mental



responsibility at the time of the crime, the military must decide whether to proceed with the case or drop the charges and have Hasan discharged from the Army based on his mental illness, Stevens said.

Prosecutors likely would dismiss the case if the board determined that Hasan lacked mental responsibility, because in a trial they would be faced with trying to discredit their own military health professionals, Stevens said. If the case goes to trial, his defense attorneys can still use the insanity defense, which is rare, Stevens said. A soldier being acquitted by reason of lacking mental responsibility also is rare and "can create great strains within the military behavioral health care system," according to a 2006 paper by three military doctors in the Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law. The military didn't establish rules for what to do with

such soldiers until 1996, according to the paper.

"He wouldn't remain in a military facility at that point because he would have been found not guilty, so the issue now is his mental state," Stevens said.

If a military jury were to acquit Hasan based on the insanity defense, he would be committed to a medical facility and evaluated to see if he poses a danger to society, Stevens said.

Then at a post-trial hearing, if the exam results revealed that he posed no danger, he could be released back to his Army unit, Stevens said. But the Army likely would have him discharged based on his mental illness and then he would be in the U.S. attorney general's custody, which would also happen if he was deemed a threat, Stevens said.

The attorney general usually asks the state to take over and place him in a mental facility, according to military law. If the state refuses, the attorney general

would have him confined to a federal facility.

It's unclear if such a defendant would ever be released, but his case likely would be governed by the rules of the state or federal system on involuntary commitments.

Authorities have not said if they plan to seek the death penalty. If they do, and Hasan is convicted and receives that punishment, he would be sent to death row at the military prison in Fort Leavenworth, Kan.

There hasn't been a military execution since 1961, though five men sit on the military's death row at Fort Leavenworth. Before a military execution can be carried out, the president must personally approve. George W. Bush signed an execution order last year for a former Army cook who was convicted of multiple rapes and murders in the 1980s, but a federal judge has stayed that order to allow for a new round of appeals in federal court. □

Aruba TODAY

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Gatecrashers went without confirmed invitation



In this image made from video provided Tuesday, Dec. 1, 2009 by NBC Universal, Tareq and Michaela Salahi are interviewed on the "Today" show. The couple that got into the White House state dinner for the visiting Indian prime minister without invitations denied Tuesday that they were gatecrashers. Appearing on the same program, White House spokesman Robert Gibbs insisted the Salahis had not been invited.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. By their own admission in the e-mails, they showed up at the White House gates at 6:30 p.m. on Nov. 24 without an invitation — "to just check in, in case it got approved since we didn't know, and our name was indeed on the list!"

But the Secret Service has said they were not on that list and that it erred by letting them in anyway. In an e-mail sent just hours after last week's dinner to Pentagon official Michele Jones, the Salahis claimed a dead cell phone battery prevented them from hearing Jones' voice mail earlier that day advising them they did not make the guest list.

A collection of e-mails between the Salahis and Jones was obtained Tuesday night by The Associated Press from a source who got them in a manner that confirmed their authenticity.

Last week's White House caper has captivated a capital where high-end social life and celebrity eruptions frequently enliven the day-to-day business of governing. Congress also is about to hold a hearing. President Barack Obama

and first lady Michelle are described as angry. And the Salahis asked a national television audience to take their word that the e-mail exchange would show that they were invited to the dinner for the visiting Indian prime minister.

Earlier Tuesday evening, the administration said it will make at least one change to its practices for invitation-only events: The White House social office will go back to making sure that one of its staff members will be present at the gates to help the Secret Service if questions come up, the first lady's communication director, Camille Johnston, said.

Meanwhile, The Washington Post reported that a charity polo event and a foundation run by the Salahis have been mired in controversy and financial disarray.

The annual polo cup event created in 2006 resulted in three vendors saying that they had not been paid, said the newspaper. The nonprofit Journey for the Cure established in 2004 never registered with Virginia to raise funds until last month, the newspaper reported. Money from the polo event was supposed to benefit the foundation.

Associated Press

EILEEN SULLIVAN
JULIE PACE

Associated Press Writers
WASHINGTON (AP) — Copies of e-mails between the White House party crashers and a Pentagon official undermine their claims that they were invited to President Barack Obama's first state dinner. Tareq and Michaela Salahi pressed the friendly Pentagon aide for four days to score tickets to the big event in honor of Indian

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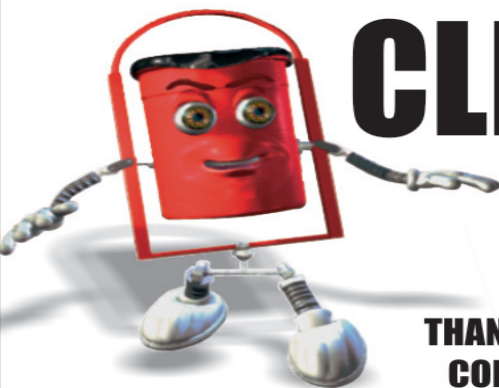
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New York state lawmakers reject gay marriage bill

MICHAEL GORMLEY
Associated Press Writer

ALBANY, New York (AP) — New York lawmakers rejected a bill Wednesday that would have made their state the sixth in America to allow gay marriage, disheartening advocates already stung by a similar decision by Maine voters just last month.

The New York measure failed by a wider-than-expected margin in a 24-38 decision by the state Senate. The Assembly had earlier approved the bill, and Gov. David Paterson, perhaps the bill's strongest advocate, had pledged to sign it.

New York also doesn't allow civil unions, but has several laws, executive orders and court decisions that grant many of the rights to gays long enjoyed by married couples.

The vote comes after months of delays and arm twisting of lawmakers sympathetic to the bill but representing conservative districts. It also follows a referendum in Maine that struck down a gay marriage law before it took effect.

Immediately after the vote, gay rights advocates chanted: "Equal rights now!" Many said they weren't surprised by the decision. Most, including Paterson, said they at least wanted a floor debate and vote.

Gay marriage is legal in Connecticut, Iowa, Massachusetts and Vermont. A New Hampshire law takes effect Jan. 1.

"It's certainly disappointing," said Richard Socarides, a 55-year-old Manhattan lawyer and resident and former President Bill Clinton's senior adviser on gay rights issues. "I'm surprised that it was not closer. We'll have

to take a hard look at what went wrong."

Sen. Eric Adams of Brooklyn challenged lawmakers to set aside their personal religious beliefs. He asked them to remember that once even slavery was legal.

"When I walk through these doors, my Bible stays out," Adams said. "That's the wrong statement," said gay marriage opponent Sen.

Ruben Diaz, a conservative minister from the Bronx. "You should carry your Bible all the time."

Diaz was the only opponent among the 38 to speak. Eighteen senators gave impassioned speeches, often about family members who survived the Holocaust and discrimination and would want gays to be equal under law. □



New York state Sens. Ruben Diaz, D-Bronx, left, and Thomas Duane, D-Manhattan, shake hands after a debate over same-sex marriage in the New York state Senate at the Capitol in Albany, N.Y., on Wednesday, Dec. 2, 2009. The bill, supported by Duane and opposed by Diaz, was defeated 38-24.

Associated Press

2 NY soldiers stabbed to death, a 3rd in custody

By **BEN DOBBIN**

Associated Press Writer

ROCHESTER, N.Y. — A Fort Drum soldier was arrested at a hotel in southern Ohio early Wednesday on a warrant charging him in the stabbing deaths of two fellow servicemen at an apartment near the military post in northern New York.

The bodies of Waide James, 20, and Diego Valbuena, 23, each with multiple stab wounds, were found Tuesday morning in an apartment complex housing mostly military families in Evans Mills near the post's main entrance. Fort Drum is the 10th Mountain Division's home base.

A warrant was issued charging Joshua Hunter, 20, with two counts of second-degree murder, county prosecutor Cindy Intschert said at a news conference. Based on a tip provided by New York authorities, Hunter was arrested at a hotel in Wheelersburg, Ohio, at about 2:30 a.m. Wednesday, said Capt. David Hall of the Scioto County Sheriff's Office.

Deputies called Hunter's cell phone and told him to surrender, which he did without incident, Hall said. Hunter is in custody at the county jail in nearby Portsmouth, Ohio.

"The impression we have right now is there's only one suspect," Tim Dowe, the Jefferson County undersheriff, said in a telephone interview.

Dowe declined to provide a motive or say whether a murder weapon was recovered. Autopsies were scheduled

Wednesday.

Hunter did not have a lawyer. He will likely be appointed one during a video arraignment at 11 a.m. Thursday with Portsmouth Municipal Court, Hall said.

Hunter indicated to deputies that he did not intend to fight extradition, Hall said.

The killings came a little more than three weeks after an Army psychiatrist was accused of killing 13 people at Fort Hood in Texas.

Hunter's father, Jim Hunter of Ona, W. Va., told The Associated Press in a telephone interview that his son spent 15 months in Iraq and had been back for about four months. He said he had seen his son in October and "seemed to be doing good."

Jim Hunter described his son as "a pretty outgoing kid" who was married, but had no children, and lived off base.

Sheriff's deputies in New York, he said, had not provided much information. "They told us not to come up until they get him from wherever he's at," he said. □

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Iran releases 5 British sailors detained at sea



FILE - In this Nov. 23, 2009 file photo, Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad speaks during a meeting with Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva in Brasilia. Ahmadinejad said Tuesday, Dec. 2, 2009 that Iran will now enrich its uranium to an even higher level, defying a U.N. call to halt the process due to fears over the country's nuclear program.

ALI AKBAR DAREINI
Associated Press Writer
TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — Iran freed five British sailors detained last week when their racing yacht drifted accidentally into Iranian waters in the Persian Gulf.

Britain said it was delighted with Wednesday's release and praised Tehran's handling of the incident.

The men arrived on shore in Dubai flashing smiles, waving at the cameras and looking relaxed.

Associated Press

"We had no intention of upsetting anyone," sailor Oliver Smith told a news conference. "We were just trying to get here (to Dubai) to start the yacht race. The guys on the ground there treated us very well," he added.

He said the five were kept together in a padlocked room, but their guards let them outside in the evenings.

The 60-foot yacht was in the Persian Gulf on its way from Bahrain to Dubai last Wednesday for the start of its first offshore race when it ran into a problem with its propeller, said Andrew Pindar, whose Team Pindar owns the yacht. It drifted into Iranian waters and was seized by the elite Revolutionary Guard's navy.

"After carrying out an investigation and interrogation of the five British sailors, it became clear that their illegal entry was a mistake," the

Revolutionary Guard said in a statement carried by the official IRNA news agency. "After obtaining necessary guarantees, it was decided to release them."

The British government had tried to keep the case from being politicized at a time when Tehran is under heavy pressure from the West over its nuclear program. Iran has accused Britain and other foreign governments of stoking the country's postelection street protests.

The tensions with the West have also been heightened by Iran's detention of three Americans arrested this summer after they strayed across the border from northern Iraq. Washington and their families say the three unintentionally crossed into Iran while hiking, but Tehran recently accused them of espionage.

Charles Porter, father of sailor Luke Porter, said his son

reported being blindfolded by Iranian authorities at first.

"The first day, two days, the Iranian authorities were very suspicious, therefore they were treated with suspicion," Porter said Wednesday after the men's families had a meeting with the Foreign Office in London.

"As soon as they understood there was no great threat. ... they were treated extremely well."

British Foreign Secretary David Miliband said the matter was handled "in a straightforward, professional way by the Iranian authorities."

It was not clear where the Britons were held during their week in custody.

Team Pindar is an independent British-based yachting team. It runs the yacht called Kingdom of Bahrain under the Sail Bahrain initiative in partnership with the tiny Gulf island kingdom of Bahrain. □



SCHEDULE FOR WEEK OF DECEMBER 3 - DECEMBER 9

*matinee: saturday & sunday | late show: friday and saturday

AT RENAISSANCE - ORANJESTAD

R	NINJA ASSASSINS	4:00	6:30	8:45	NEW
	daily:		late show:	11:00	
	matinee:	1:30			
G	THE PRINCESS AND THE FROG	4:30	6:45		NEW
	daily:	2:15	late show:		
	matinee:	12:00			
R	PRECIOUS	7:00	9:30	12:00	
	daily:		late show:		
	matinee:				
R	NEX DAY AIR		9:00	11:00	
	daily:		late show:		
	matinee:				
PG	OLD DOGS	4:15	6:15	8:15	10:15
	daily:	12:15	2:15	late show:	12:15
	matinee:				
PG-13	2012	4:15	7:45	11:15	
	daily:	12:45	late show:		
	matinee:				
G	SINTERKLAAS EN DE VERDWENEN PAKJESBOOT	4:45			
	daily:	2:30	late show:		
	matinee:	12:15			
PG-13	THE TWILIGHT SAGA: NEW MOON	6:00	9:00		
	daily:	3:00	late show:	11:45	
	matinee:	12:15			

AT PASEO HERENCIA

PG-13	EVERYBODY'S FINE	4:30	6:45	9:00	NEW
	daily:	2:15	late show:	11:15	
	matinee:	12:00			
G	THE PRINCESS AND THE FROG	4:45			NEW
	daily:	2:30	late show:		
	matinee:	12:15			
PG-13	THE TWILIGHT SAGA: NEW MOON	5:30	8:30	11:30	
	daily:	2:45	late show:		
	matinee:	12:00			
R	LAW ABIDING CITIZEN		9:15	12:00	
	daily:		late show:		
	matinee:				
PG-13	2012	4:30	8:00	11:15	
	daily:	1:00	late show:		
	matinee:				
PG-13	COUPLES RETREAT	7:15	9:45	12:15	
	daily:		late show:		
	matinee:				
PG-13	WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE	5:00			
	daily:	2:45	late show:		
	matinee:	12:30			
R	PARANORMAL ACTIVITY	7:00	9:15	11:30	
	daily:		late show:		
	matinee:				
PG	A CHRISTMAS CAROL 3D	4:45	7:00		3D
	daily:	2:30	late show:		
	matinee:	12:15			

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Report: 2,600 bodies found in Kashmir graves

AIJAZ HUSSAIN

Associated Press Writer

SRINAGAR, India (AP) — Nearly 2,600 bodies have been discovered in single unmarked and mass graves throughout mountainous Indian Kashmir and some of the dead were likely innocent people killed by security forces, a human rights group alleges in a report.

More than a dozen Kashmiri rebel groups have been fighting for independence from India or a union with predominantly Muslim Pakistan since 1989. Rights groups say there have been more than 8,000 disappearances since the rebellion began.

Researchers from the International People's Tribunal on Human Rights and Justice, an Indian Kashmir-based rights group, said they found the graves in 55 villages during a three-year survey that concluded last month.

In a report titled "Buried Evidence" released Wednesday, the group documented 2,373 "unmarked and mass

graves" containing nearly 2,600 bodies. It said 177 of the graves contained more than one body.

"We're not saying who is in each grave. But we're saying these are unnamed graves and its imperative to investigate the issue by an independent international body," said Angna Chatterji, one of the group's members.

The report also said it found evidence of 47 civilians being killed by security forces, who later claimed they were militants. Human rights workers have complained for years that innocent people have disappeared and been killed by government forces in staged gunbattles.

About 68,000 people, mostly civilians, have died in the 20-year conflict.

Ali Mohammed Sagar, Indian-Kashmir's law and parliamentary affairs minister, said Wednesday the government would respond to the report after reading it.

Indian authorities have dismissed widespread allegations of human



Angna Chatterji, one of the conveners of the International People's Tribunal on Human Rights and Justice, speaks as lawyer Pervez Imroz looks on during a press conference in Srinagar, India, Wednesday, Dec. 2, 2009. Human rights workers have found the graves of nearly 2,400 unidentified people scattered in cemeteries across dozens of mountainous villages in Indian Kashmir during a three year survey, the rights group said Wednesday, alleging that some of the dead were likely innocent people killed by government forces.

rights abuses by the army, paramilitary and police in the region. Officials have said in the past that many militants have been killed in fighting with security forces and bodies are often buried in unmarked graves. The government also says most of those who have disappeared are young Kashmiris who crossed

into neighboring Pakistani-controlled Kashmir for weapons training. Anti-India sentiment runs deep in Kashmir, a mostly

Muslim region divided between majority-Hindu India and Pakistan, but claimed by both in its entirety. □

Associated Press

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Israeli police arrest settler leader in West Bank

JOSEF FEDERMAN

Associated Press Writer

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israeli police arrested the mayor of a West Bank Jewish settlement on Wednesday after protesters blocked security forces from entering the community to enforce a construction freeze.

The showdown was the most serious incident of settler unrest since Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu last week announced the 10-month building freeze, which bars the construction of new homes in West Bank settlements.

Settler leaders have vowed to defy the order, which Netanyahu says is meant as a confidence-building gesture to get peace efforts with the Palestinians back on track.

Confronting the settlers could help Netanyahu convince skeptical Palestinians and a wary Obama administration that he's serious about resuming talks. The Palestinians are refusing to talk peace with Netanyahu and say his settlement freeze is a sham because it excludes certain projects as well as east Jerusalem, the section of the holy city they claim as a capital.

An Israeli advocacy group on Wednesday released a report



Jewish settlers build a cement foundation for a synagogue as a symbolic act of protest against the Israeli government decision to freeze construction of private homes in settlements, in the West Bank Jewish settlement of Efrat south of Jerusalem, Wednesday, Dec. 2, 2009. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu last week announced a 10-month building freeze, which bars the construction of new homes in West Bank settlements.

showing a sharp rise in the number of east Jerusalem Arabs who were stripped of their residency in 2008. HaMoked said Israel's Interior Ministry revoked the residency of 4,577 east Jerusalemites in 2008 — more than 20 times the annual average of the previous 40 years. It cited official statistics

obtained under a freedom of information request.

The Interior Ministry refused to confirm the statistics, but said that individuals must prove they spend most of their time in the city to maintain their residency.

“At the beginning of 2009, the immigration authority decided to conduct a thorough

check of permanent residents in Israel whose center of life is not in Israel,” the statement read. “When it was found that many do not live in Israel, it was decided to update their status in the registry accordingly.”

East Jerusalem Palestinians, in contrast to those in the West Bank, have residency rights that allow them to travel freely in Israel and entitle them to Israeli health care and social benefits.

HaMoked's executive director, Dalia Kerstein, said the Interior Ministry action is aimed at cementing Israeli control over Jerusalem.

In Wednesday's unrest, Avi Naim, mayor of the Beit Arie settlement in the central West Bank, was apprehended for allegedly disrupting a police officer in the line of duty, said settler spokesman Yishai Hollender.

He said Naim and a group of settlers had blocked the entrance to the settlement when troops arrived to hand out orders to cease construction at the site.

Inspection teams, joined by soldiers and police, have visited dozens of the roughly 120 Jewish settlements in the West Bank in recent days to enforce the order. The Israeli military said it has issued

more than 60 orders to halt unauthorized construction and confiscated about a half-dozen pieces of heavy equipment.

While there have been minor confrontations between settlers and security forces, there have been no reports of violence.

The settlement freeze has put both Netanyahu and the settlers into delicate situations.

The settler movement, a small but formerly influential lobbying group, has been struggling to regain its strength since Israel withdrew from the Gaza Strip in 2005, uprooting all 8,000 settlers living there. At the same time, the settlers are wary of being portrayed as violent extremists.

Dani Dayan, leader of the West Bank settlers' council, said that activists would use only nonviolent means to defy the freeze.

“We'll do whatever it takes to preserve our communities. This is where we live. We can build where we want,” he said during a cornerstone laying ceremony for a new synagogue in the settlement of Efrat. “If we have to be arrested, we will be arrested.” Defense Minister Ehud Barak met settler leaders late Wednesday. According to a statement from his office, he said that the main blocks of settlements near the Israel-West Bank line are “an integral part of Israel as regards any negotiations with the Palestinians.” Barak is the head of the centrist Labor Party, which backs giving up much of the West Bank for peace.

The Palestinians have refused to start peace talks with Netanyahu unless he freezes all settlement construction in the West Bank and east Jerusalem — captured areas they claim as parts of a future independent state. Some 300,000 settlers live in the West Bank, in addition to 180,000 Jewish Israelis living in east Jerusalem.

They have rejected Netanyahu's 10-month freeze as insufficient because it does not include east Jerusalem or 3,000 homes that were already under construction when the order was approved. □

Witness: Ex-dictator said he wanted more killings

CLIFFTON SARIDJAN

Associated Press Writer

BOXEL, Suriname (AP) — A former journalist testified Wednesday that Suriname's ex-military dictator made an off-the-record comment during an interview that more people should have been killed during his left-leaning regime in the 1980s.

Henry Doest, a former reporter for the Suriname newspaper Mokro, told a three-member military tribunal overseeing the murder trial that Desi Bouterse made the comment during an interview about two years ago. He said he believed the statement indicated Bouterse was involved in the execution of 15 regime opponents on Dec. 7, 1982.

“More people should have been killed” during his regime, Doest quoted Bouterse as saying. “I wish he was here in the courtroom so I could see his face,” Doest added, visibly angry.

The former dictator's lawyer, Irwin Kanhai, abruptly left the courtroom shortly after the day's testimony started. Kanhai, who has clashed repeatedly with the military judges, did not respond to calls asking for comment on Doest's claim.

Bouterse, who is now chairman of Suriname's

main opposition party, also could not be reached for comment. He has denied any involvement in the 1982 slayings, although in March 2007 he offered a public apology and said he accepted political responsibility for the killings.

Bouterse and 11 others are charged with murder in the killing of the 15 regime opponents, who included politicians, journalists, union leaders, lawyers and soldiers.

The victims were allegedly taken by soldiers to Fort Zeelandia in Paramaribo and shot one by one. Two days after the killings, Bouterse said in a televised statement that the 15 men had been shot while trying to flee police detention.

On Tuesday, when the trial resumed after a monthlong delay, a witness placed Bouterse at the scene where the 15 were executed. Sali Blik, a former cameraman for a state-owned television station, testified he saw Bouterse at the military post sitting beside one of the victims after forcing him to make a statement on camera hours before the man was shot.

The trial started more than a year ago but has been delayed for numerous reasons, including witnesses who failed to appear in court. □

Honduran lawmakers debate ousted leader's future

ALEXANDRA OLSON
Associated Press Writer

TEGUCIGALPA, Honduras (AP) — Honduran lawmakers debated ousted President Manuel Zelaya's future Wednesday under international pressure to reinstate him or face more isolation, despite an election that has chosen his successor. It's unlikely to make a difference. The interim administration has already resisted months of diplomatic arm-twisting, and has long predicted Sunday's election would weaken demands for Zelaya's return.

Lawmakers who already voted once to support Zelaya's overthrow insist they won't be swayed. And Zelaya himself, who listened to the proceedings Wednesday from his refuge in the Brazilian Embassy, says he won't return for a token two months even if asked.

Still, many Latin American governments warn they will not restore ties with the incoming administration of Porfirio Lobo unless Zelaya is allowed to finish his term, which ends Jan. 27.

A lawmaker from Lobo's conservative National Party introduced a motion during Wednesday's debate to ratify the decision Congress made on June 28, when lawmakers voted to kick Zelaya out of office. That decision came hours after soldiers stormed into Zelaya's residence and flew him into exile in his pajamas.

Ninety-two lawmakers signed the motion, an easy majority in the members of the 128-seat, single house Congress. Only 75 votes are needed to reaffirm Zelaya's ouster.

"We stand by our position that Zelaya can't be restored because he violated the constitution," Rodolfo Irias, the congressional president of the National Party, said during the debate.

Congress is dominated by Zelaya's Liberal Party, which largely turned against him in a dispute over changing the constitution.

Congressional President Jose Alfredo Saavedra, of the Liberal Party, insisted he felt no pressure from abroad,

saying he had met with diplomats of many countries and none had suggested he vote one way or the other.

"Congress has not been the object of pressure of any nature," Saavedra told Channel 5. "Nobody, absolutely nobody, has dared to insinuate what the route should be." Outside congress, 300 Zelaya supporters protested behind police lines.

Lobo, a wealthy rancher, won the regularly scheduled presidential vote that Honduras' interim leaders insist shows their country's democracy is intact.

Many Latin American countries, especially those led by left-leaning governments, say recognizing the election would amount to legitimizing Central America's first coup in 20 years.

"A new form of coup d'etat has emerged," Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez said during a televised speech Wednesday. "Just as the money from drug trafficking is laundered, these elections were similar. It's laundering a coup d'etat in a shameless way before the world."

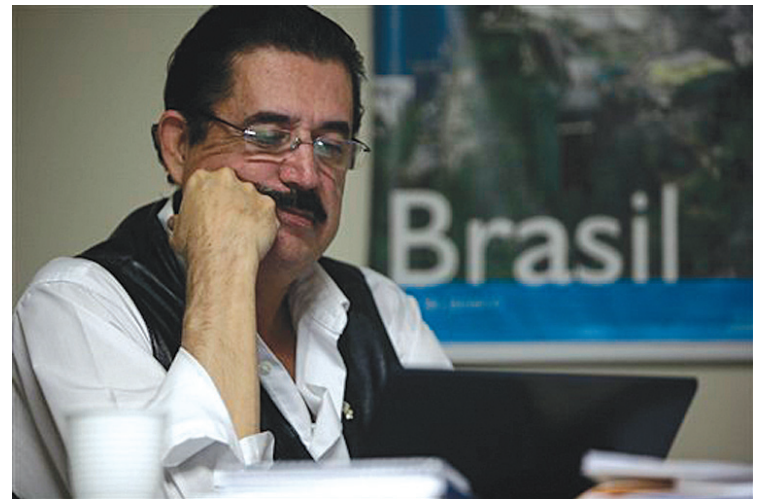
The Western Hemisphere, however, is divided.

President Barack Obama's administration is urging Zelaya's reinstatement but has stopped short of making it a condition for recognizing Lobo's government. Costa Rica, Peru, Panama and Colombia share the U.S. stance.

Zelaya's reinstatement is not required by a U.S.-brokered pact that was signed by both the deposed leader and interim President Roberto Micheletti. The pact requires only that a unity government be created for the remainder of Zelaya's term and it leaves the decision on restoring Zelaya to office up to Congress. Zelaya signed the deal after congressional leaders indicated they were open to voting him back into power, but chances for that look increasingly slim.

Zelaya says even if Congress votes him back in he will not resume the presidency because, he contends, the agreement was broken when lawmakers delayed their vote until after the presidential election.

Congress could delay its



Honduras' ousted President Manuel Zelaya works in his laptop at a Brazilian embassy in Tegucigalpa, Wednesday, Nov. 4, 2009. A Honduran lawmaker says congressional leaders will seek the opinions of several government entities before convoking the full legislature to vote on reinstating ousted President Manuel Zelaya.

Associated Press

decision even longer. Saavedra said that lawmakers must consider opinions submitted by four institutions, including the Supreme Court, and the discussion could last until at least Friday. Congressional leaders started the debate by reading those opinions aloud. All recommended that Zelaya not be reinstated because he faces charges of abusing power and other infractions. Zelaya, who has been holed up at the Brazilian Embassy

since he sneaked back into Honduras on Sept. 21, listened to the debate on the radio, said his adviser, Russell Tome. The deposed leader has not said what his next steps will be, although he insists he has no plans to seek asylum abroad. Zelaya was deposed for ignoring a Supreme Court order to cancel a referendum that would have asked Hondurans if they wanted an assembly to rewrite the constitution. □

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SPORTS

Aruba TODAY



Michael Weiner, general counsel for the Major League Baseball Players Association, is interviewed in New York, Monday, Nov. 16, 2009. Weiner is likely to succeed Donald Fehr as executive director of baseball's players' union Wednesday, Dec. 2, 2009. He will become only the fourth leader of the powerful union since 1966.

RONALD BLUM
AP Sports Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The number of baseball players authorized to use otherwise banned stimulants because they have ADHD rose by a small amount for the second straight year.

Associated Press
Baseball granted 108 therapeutic use exemptions for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder during the year ending with this World Series, according to the annual report released Tuesday by MLB's independent drug-testing administrator.

Stimulant exemptions in MLB slightly on the rise again

That was up from 106 a year earlier and 103 in 2007.

Dr. Gary Wadler, a frequent critic of baseball's drug-testing program, praised the sport's overall progress but said the amount of the ADHD exemptions, known as TUEs, was a concern.

"Is there something unique about the sport of baseball that attracts individuals with ADD? I suspect not. It seems to me an excessively high number," said Wadler, chairman of the committee that determines the banned-substances list for the World Anti-Doping Agency. "This is a problem that merits some independent analysis. Is the TUE process as tight as it needs to be or does it represent some sort of a loophole?"

Rob Manfred, Major League Baseball's executive vice president for labor relations, said the level of TUEs was not cause for alarm. Manfred said Wadler's concerns were not justified because ADHD is more prevalent among males and young people.

"These TUEs are based on diagnoses that originally are made by a doctor and they are reviewed by one if not more doctors to verify the diagnoses," Manfred said. "And I've got to rely on the medical people."

Other than ADHD, there were just seven TUEs: two each for hypertension and hypogonadism, and one each for narcolepsy, obsessive-compulsive disorder and post-

concussion syndrome.

There were 12 positives for banned stimulants among 3,722 tests under the major league program.

Since no players were suspended for stimulants, they either were initial positive tests, which don't cause suspensions, or are still in the arbitration process. Eleven of the positives were for Adderall, the other for Clobenzorex.

The one positive for a performance-enhancing substance was for nandrolone. Baseball's only announced suspension for a positive test taken this year under the major league program was given in March to San Francisco Giants pitcher Kelvin Pichardo, who was banned for 50 games.

There also was one positive not related to a test. In March, Los Angeles Dodgers outfielder Manny Ramirez was suspended for 50 games after baseball obtained records that showed he used the female fertility drug HCG, or human chorionic gonadotropin.

Baseball conducted 3,722 tests, up from 3,486 the previous year.

"We had a very low number of positives, low numbers on the stimulants and steroids, which is a very good development," Manfred said.

Wadler agreed with Manfred's assessment of the overall program.

"Baseball has done a good job over the last several years in cleaning house over the whole issue of performance-enhancing drugs, anabolic steroids," he said.

Dr. Bryan Smith issued the report under toughened rules baseball adopted last year at the recommendation of former Senate majority leader George Mitchell. □

Arum goes to Philippines for fight meet

LAS VEGAS (AP) — Promoter Bob Arum flew Wednesday to the Philippines with a proposed contract for a March 13 fight between Manny Pacquiao and Floyd Mayweather Jr. The contract was agreed to by Mayweather's representatives, but the boxer has yet to sign. Arum was to present the proposal to Pacquiao, but there are no guarantees he will agree.

Still, the fact Arum would make the trip to the Philippines to try and get his fighter to sign for the bout was an indication that the megafight was moving forward. It would match the two fighters regarded as the best pound-for-pound in the world in a bout at 66.7 kilograms (147 pounds).

The fight was originally projected for May, but Pacquiao's candidacy for Congress in the Philippines forced promoters to move it forward to March. The Philippine national elections are in May, and Pacquiao wanted to be at home to campaign.

Promoters for both fighters had agreed to a blackout on negotiations for the bout, so no one would comment on the record. A person close to the promotion spoke on terms his identity would remain confidential.

If the fight is made, there would likely be a Jan. 11 press conference in New York to announce it. The bout could be the richest ever, assuming pay-per-view projections are accurate.

Representatives of the Superdome in New Orleans and the new Dallas Cowboys' stadium have expressed interest in



Promoter Bob Arum, right, welcomes Manny Pacquiao, of the Philippines, to a post-fight press conference following Pacquiao's WBO welterweight boxing title fight win over Miguel Cotto, of Puerto Rico, Saturday, Nov. 14, 2009 in Las Vegas. Pacquiao won the bout by TKO in the 12th round.

Associated Press
hosting the fight, as has the MGM Grand hotel-casino in Las Vegas, where the fighters have fought their biggest fights. There is also a proposal for a 30,000-seat temporary stadium on the Las Vegas Strip across from the Wynn resort.

Odds makers are already taking bets on the fight, with most making the undefeated Mayweather a slight favorite. □

NBA Roundup

Strong start pushes Heat over Blazers, 107-100

PORTLAND, Oregon (AP) — The Miami Heat took control from the start to record a 107-100 win over the Portland Trail Blazers in the NBA on Tuesday.

Michael Beasley scored a season-high 27 points and Dwyane Wade had 18 points and 12 assists for Miami.

Beasley was 8 of 15 from the field and 11 of 12 for free throws as the Heat shot 53.3 percent from the field.

Greg Oden grabbed a career-high 20 rebounds and scored 13 points for Portland, which shot .391 in losing its third consecutive game. The Blazers were without forward LaMarcus Aldridge, who has a bruised right knee.

Miami scored the game's first seven points on the way to a 32-28 lead at the end of the first quarter.

Celtics 108, Bobcats 90

In Charlotte, North Carolina, Boston cruised past Charlotte for its fifth straight victory.

Ray Allen broke out of his shooting slump with 27 points and Kendrick Perkins added 21 points and 12 rebounds for the Celtics, who had little trouble slowing the Bobcats, who had won four straight.

Entering shooting 30 percent from 3-point range, Allen took only nine shots, but hit 5 of 6 3-pointers, including one from behind the plane of the backboard with 1 second left to give the Celtics a 62-39 halftime lead.

Charlotte never recovered as Gerald Wallace scored just five points after getting into early foul trouble. Nazr Mohammed had 16 points for the Bobcats.

Lakers 110, Hornets 99

In Los Angeles, the hosts won their seventh straight, downing New Orleans, to take the overall NBA lead.

Andrew Bynum scored 21 points and Kobe Bryant added 18 on a light night of work. Darren Collison scored 20 points for the Hornets, who lost their fifth straight road game. New Orleans has the NBA's second-worst road record at 1-9, only ahead of the 0-11 New Jersey Nets, and is winless on the road since Nov. 9.

Nuggets 135, Warriors 107

In Denver, the home team had their biggest score of the season to record an easy win over Golden State.

Carmelo Anthony scored 25 points and Chauncey Billups had 22 to be among seven Nuggets in double figures.

Anthony Morrow's 27 points led the Warriors, who fell to



Miami Heat's Michael Beasley (30) is fouled as he drives to the basket as Portland Trail Blazers' Greg Oden and Brandon Roy defend during the second quarter of their NBA basketball game Tuesday, Dec. 1, 2009, in Portland, Ore.

Associated Press

2-8 on the road.

Up by 14 at halftime, the Nuggets extended their lead to 107-84 by the end of the third quarter.

Nicks 126, Suns 99

In New York, the hosts snapped a five-game losing skid and gave their coach a resounding victory over his old team Phoenix.

In other NBA games it was: Boston 108, Charlotte 90; Washington 106, Toronto 102; New York 126, Phoenix 99; Denver 135, Golden State 107; Miami 107, Portland 100; and L.A. Lakers 110, New Orleans 99. □

Allen Iverson signs with 76ers again

DAN GELSTON

AP Sports Writer

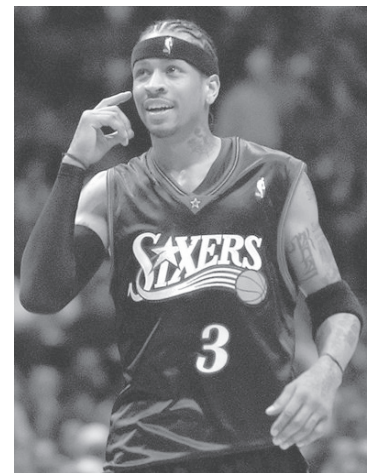
PHILADELPHIA (AP)

— Allen Iverson is rejoining the Philadelphia 76ers and is expected to make his debut Monday at home against the Denver Nuggets.

Iverson's brief retirement is over after signing a free-agent contract with Philadelphia on Wednesday, three years after their acrimonious split led to his trade and seemingly ended any chance of his return.

The Sixers needed a replacement once they lost starting point guard Lou Williams, who's expected to miss eight weeks after jaw surgery. Williams, who averaged 17.4 points and 5.1 assists, broke his jaw in a loss to Washington on Nov. 24.

Iverson, his agent and business manager met with team president Ed Stefanski, coach Eddie Jordan and two other members of the organization Monday to talk about returning. "Without really seeing him on the floor, I would like to compare him to Brett Favre, a guy who people think is too old to play and he's almost having an MVP year," Jordan said. "That's off the top of my head. When I woke up this morning, I said, 'Maybe he can be that.' It's not a big maybe. I think he can be that." The 34-year-old Iverson announced his retirement last



In this April 12, 2006, file photo Philadelphia 76ers' Allen Iverson reacts during the fourth quarter of an NBA basketball game against the New Jersey Nets, in East Rutherford, N.J. Philadelphia 76ers president Ed Stefanski announced Wednesday, Dec. 2, 2009, on the team's Web site that Iverson will rejoining the 76ers.

Associated Press

week after a stint with the Memphis Grizzlies. The 10-time All-Star was NBA MVP in 2001, when he led the Sixers to the NBA finals.

"We had, at times, a rocky road with Allen Iverson, but we also had a fantastic run with Allen," Peter Luukko, COO of Comcast-Spectacor, which owns the 76ers and Flyers, told The Associated Press. "The expectations with Allen have changed dramatically. We're not looking for Allen to individually lead this team the way he has in the past." □

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NHL Roundup

Heatley stars for Sharks against Senators

SAN JOSE, California (AP) — Dany Heatley assisted on two goals in his first game against Ottawa since his blockbuster trade to San Jose, leading the Sharks to a 5-2 win over the Senators in the NHL on Tuesday.

Patrick Marleau scored on both of Heatley's assists, passing him for the team lead with 19 goals. Jamie McGinn, Ryane Clowe and Manny Malhotra also scored for San Jose, while Joe Thornton had two assists to up his league-leading total to 32.

Milan Michalek, traded to Ottawa in the September deal for Heatley, scored both goals for the Senators.

The Sharks, which boast the league's best record, became the first team this season to pass the 100-goal milestone.

Blackhawks 4, Blue Jackets 3 SO

In Chicago, Brent Seabrook scored in the 11th round of a shootout, giving Chicago victory over Columbus.

Marian Hossa, playing his first game with the Blackhawks at the United Center, scored in the second round of the shootout. Columbus' Jakub Voracek tied it in the next round, setting the stage for a goaltending battle between Steve Mason and Chicago's Cristobal Huet before Seabrook skated in for the winner.

Chicago's Joel Quenneville became the 14th NHL coach



San Jose Sharks right wing Dany Heatley hands off his stick to a fan after a win over his former team, the Ottawa Senators in an NHL hockey game in San Jose, Calif., Tuesday, Dec. 1, 2009. San Jose won 5-2.

Associated Press

to reach 500 wins.

In regulation, Chicago got power-play goals from Jonathan Toews and Patrick Sharp and a short-handed score from Kris Versteeg.

Kris Russell, Antoine Vermette and Samuel Pahlsson scored for the Blue Jackets.

Kings 4, Ducks 3

In Anaheim, California, Jack Johnson scored the go-ahead goal with 2:20 left as Los Angeles beat Anaheim in the first meeting of the season between the city rivals.

Scott Parse and Justin Williams scored first-period goals for the Kings and Randy Jones connected in the second.

Anaheim's Corey Perry had a goal and an assist to extend his point streak to 19 games, tied for the longest by an NHL player since Paul Stastny's 20-game run in 2006-07. Sidney Crosby also had a 19-game streak for Pittsburgh two seasons ago.

Ryan Whitney and Todd Marchant also scored for the Ducks.

Maple Leafs 3, Canadiens 0

In Montreal, Toronto goalie Jonas Gustavsson was taken to the hospital with an elevated heart rate following the first period of the Maple Leafs' victory over Montreal.

In other NHL games it was: Toronto 3, Montreal 0; Chicago 4, Columbus 3, SO; San Jose 5, Ottawa 2; and Los Angeles 4, Anaheim 3.

Green stops Roy Jones Jr. in first round tko

SYDNEY (AP) — Australian Danny Green stopped Roy Jones Jr. in the first round of their IBO world cruiserweight title fight Wednesday, preventing the 40-year-old American from claiming his ninth title across five weight classes.

The 36-year-old Green retained his belt and improved to 28-3 with a technical knockout at Acer Arena. It was Jones' first professional fight outside America in his 20-year boxing career.

It was only Jones' sixth loss since 1989, along with 54 wins, 40 by knockout.

Green hit Jones with a right hand to the head after one minute. Green moved in to apply more pressure, and after a series of blows, English referee Howard Foster stopped the bout after just 122 seconds.

Jones offered no excuses for a defeat which could signal the end of his career.

"We don't make excuses, it was a great performance by Danny," Jones said.

Green was almost apologetic for handing such a defeat to one of his boxing role models.

"He's one of the greatest fighters of all time and the opportunity to fight him in Australia, thanks Roy Jones Jr.," Green told the crowd.

"I almost feel bad doing that, that almost most hurt me to do that to someone whom I aspire to look up to as a professional fighter inside and outside the ring. He's a bloody legend." After a near one-hour delay following an undercard bout, Jones entered the arena to mild applause. But Green, with the Australian band Men at Work's song "Down Under" playing, entered the ring to rapturous applause moments later.

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Colombia acusa a Venezuela de “embargo ilegal” sobre el país

BOGOTA (Reuters) - Colombia acusó el miércoles a Venezuela de realizar un “embargo ilegal” contra el país andino con la decisión de restringir el comercio binacional, al tiempo que criticó que otras naciones están aprovechando la situación, lo que genera desconfianza en la región.

El más reciente capítulo de tensión entre los dos países se produjo el pasado lunes, cuando militares venezolanos expulsaron a más de 400 mineros ilegales, la mayoría colombianos, de un yacimiento aurífero, una decisión que defendió el Gobierno de ese país.

“En Venezuela hay un embargo contra la economía colombiana, y es un embargo ilegal, injusto”, dijo el presidente colombiano, Alvaro Uribe. El presidente venezolano, Hugo Chávez, ordenó reducir a cero el comercio con Colombia, que el año pasado totalizó cerca de 7.000 millones de dólares, como represalia a la firma de un acuerdo militar entre

Bogotá y Washington que le permite utilizar siete bases. Chávez ve en el pacto un riesgo de una potencial invasión estadounidense a su país, uno de los mayores productores de petróleo del mundo. La determinación está retrasando la recuperación de la economía colombiana, que en la primera mitad del año entró en terreno recesivo.

“Tanto se han quejado del embargo contra Cuba, y ahora Venezuela lo que tiene es un embargo contra Colombia. Está creando aquí un Muro de Berlín contra Colombia”, agregó Uribe.

PAISES SUSTITUTOS

Además, el mandatario alertó que otros países de la región están aprovechando la situación para reemplazar los productos que abastecía Colombia al vecino país, con el que comparte una frontera de más de 2.200 kilómetros.

“Y lo que me preocupa, porque genera desconfianza, es que otros países de la región han aprovechado y se han ido al mercado de Venezuela a

sustituir los productos de Colombia. Entonces me pregunto: ¿estamos en unión o no estamos en unión? ¿Hay propósito de unidad suramericana o no lo hay?”, anotó. Chávez, un ex militar, está sustituyendo parte del comercio que ostentaba con Colombia con países como Argentina y Brasil. Uribe, el principal aliado de Estados Unidos en la región, también pidió a Venezuela protección para los colombianos que viven en ese país, después de que 11 de ellos, integrantes de un equipo de fútbol, fueron masacrados allí.

“A nosotros eso nos preocupa mucho, porque así como nosotros somos responsables con la seguridad de los ciudadanos de otros países que viven en Colombia, también tenemos que preocuparnos por la protección de los ciudadanos nuestros que viven en otros países, en este caso en la hermana República de Venezuela”, concluyó. □



Foto de archivo del presidente Alvaro Uribe durante una conferencia de prensa en Cúcuta, Colombia, nov 21 2009. REUTERS/Jose Miguel Gomez

En Uruguay

Evacuados miles de personas por inundaciones

MONTEVIDEO (Reuters) - Más de 6.000 personas permanecían fuera de sus hogares en el norte y noroeste de Uruguay debido a las continuas lluvias y el avance de las inundaciones por la crecida de ríos y arroyos, informó el miércoles el Sistema Nacional de Emergencias.

Imágenes de canales de televisión y fotografías en periódicos mostraban localidades semi sumergidas en departamentos del litoral oeste, y miles de hectáreas de cultivos bajo las aguas. Las inundaciones comenzaron a afectar el área hace casi dos semanas por intensas lluvias y la represa de Salto Grande, en el fronterizo río Uruguay con Argentina, se vio obligada a abrir sus compuertas para que el agua no sobrepasara la construcción.

Los departamentos más afectados son Salto y Paysandú -en el noroeste-, con más de 5.400 personas evacuadas, de un total de 6.184 en todo el país. Cuatro hombres murieron en las últimas dos semanas, arrastrados por las aguas cuando intentaban cruzar cañadas o arroyos crecidos. □

Confirman 5,1 millones personas podrán votar el domingo Bolivia

LA PAZ (Reuters) - La autoridad electoral de Bolivia anunció el miércoles que los 5,1 millones de ciudadanos inscritos en el padrón, entre ellos 400.000 “observados”, podrán votar el domingo en los comicios en que el presidente Evo Morales buscará renovar su mandato por cinco años.

El anuncio puso fin a una de las últimas polémicas previas a una votación de la cual, según casi todas las encuestas, el indígena izquierdista surgiría como el primer presidente en ejercicio en ganar la reelección inmediata en la breve historia democrática del empobrecido país.

La cifra definitiva de votantes había estado en duda en la última semana, a causa de una resolución de la Corte Nacional Electoral (CNE), criticada por el Gobierno, que condicionó la participación de 400.000 ciudadanos a que presenten certificados de nacimiento, documentos no exigidos previamente.

“Los ciudadanos todavía observados podrán votar el domingo, pero deberán regularizar

sus documentos antes de la siguiente elección”, dijo a reporteros el presidente de la CNE, Antonio Costas, al anunciar que el organismo decidió el martes autorizar la votación de todos los inscritos.

Costas agregó que la CNE “no decidió bajo presión”, en referencia a las protestas del Gobierno y de ciudadanos amenazados con la exclusión del proceso electoral por la resolución que finalmente quedó sin efecto.

El presidente Morales dijo en conferencia de prensa que “la Corte Electoral ha corregido y esto está terminado. Se había equivocado pero en vez de perjudicar, como parece que pretendía, ha fortalecido a la democracia por la respuesta de la ciudadanía”.

El gobernante auguró una “fiesta democrática” para el domingo y llamó a una participación plena de los electores “para marcar otro récord como en el referéndum de enero”, en el que se aprobó una nueva constitución con una participación de más del 90 por ciento de los entonces 3,8 millones de votantes habilitados. □

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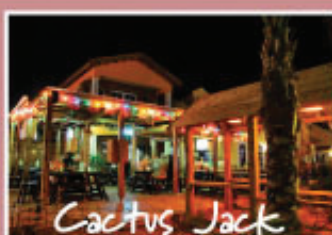


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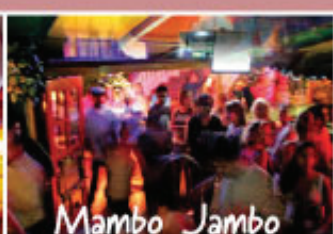
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